

## REVIEWS

Roderich Ptak, *Die Maritime Seidenstrasse. Küstenräume, Seefahrt und Handel in vorkolonialer Zeit*. Munich, C. H. Beck, 2007, 368 pp., 46 ills, 14 maps (Historische Bibliothek der Gerda Henkel Stiftung).

Literally translated, the title reads ‘the maritime silk road, its coastal areas, seafaring and trade in pre-colonial times’. This, as in the original German wording, does not reveal the book’s rather seminal approach and gist, which challenge the European-trained perspective and, much more importantly, almost close a gap while studiously pinpointing certain lacunae.

The coastal area of present-day China is dotted with entrepôts that established and operated maritime links across the oceans, roughly between the longitudes of 35°E (the Red Sea) and 132°E (Kyushu, Japan and Moluccas, Indonesia). The researcher and author, professor of sinology at the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich, Germany, draws a parallel between Rome reaching out towards the East, in succession to the Greeks, at a time when China began to make westward seaborne contacts with India, in the epoch covered by Pliny the Elder (p. 73). On the choice of the term ‘maritime silk road’, the author refers to the recent publication by Liu Yingsheng titled *Silu wenhua. Haishang juan*, presented in two volumes, one covering maritime routes and the other land routes (p. 18). As pointed out by Ptak,

‘silk’ is only one of several possible similes, such as ‘spices’ or ‘ceramics’. While the vast ocean is an entity defined by physical conditions, its numerous various segments are distinguished by cultures and histories of exchange. The segmentation recorded in texts of the Song Period (960–1281) is apparently based on Arab categorization. European advances connecting the Asian, Atlantic and Pacific regions of the globe confine the time frame of this presentation.

Through an essay rather than an introduction, the author offers a discourse of the Mediterranean model by Fernand Braudel (*La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II*), a seminal work that has reinforced interest in historical research into maritime relations elsewhere. Though triggered by this academic stimulus, the Asian physical, geographical factors require a distinctively different approach, coupled with a perspective originating from the East. In great detail, ocean and drift currents as well as wind directions are described in relation to challenges posed by reefs and atolls, and examples given of the time required for certain sea passages.

Research findings are presented in chronological order, however, in an east-west direction, to probe how and in which way the sub-regions traversed by the ‘maritime silk road’ grew together, which structures emerged, which changes occurred, and what particular perceptions were kept on record.

The maritime space covered by this book encompasses Asia’s eastern oceans

with the Gulf of Bohai, the Yellow Sea, and the East China Sea; the South China Sea and Sulu Sea; the East Indonesian Seas; the Melaka Straits, the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Bengal; the Arabian Sea and the coast of East Africa; and the Persian Gulf and Red Sea.

Likening this maritime space to an (oriental) tapestry carpet, the author traces what evolved from the early beginnings to the turn of the present era AD, with foci on East Asia's coasts into the Han Period (206 BC–220 AD); the virtually *terra incognita* of Southeast Asia; the underrated South Asia; and the seemingly known coasts of West Asia and East Africa. Han sources describe vessels designed, built and used in warfare, implying technical expertise, knowledge of logistics, and navigation skills (p. 60). After all, the settling of migrants from present-day Indonesia on Madagascar did, in all likelihood, depend on proven navigation skills, suitable vessels, and rigid organization (p. 62).

The growing together, ca. 1–600 AD, of the 'Eastern Ocean' (*Dongyang*) and the 'Southern Ocean' (*Nanyang*), followed by the unfolding of the Western Ocean (*Xiyang*), as recorded in Chinese annals, and encompassing in the Western Ocean, first, the Eastern Indic / Indian Ocean and, then, linking-up to the Western Indic / Indian Ocean, complete with the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, resulted in what the author paraphrases as the *Mare Euro-Asiaticum*.

During the span of time of the Tang Empire in China (ca. 600–950/1000)

and the Caliphate of the Sassanids, followed by the Omayyads, then Abbasids, Asia's eastern oceans were dominated by the Tang. Seaborne trade reinforced the spread of Buddhism towards the east, while the South China Sea became the scenario of encounters between Southeast Asians, Chinese and 'Persians'. Also, across the Eastern Indic / Indian Ocean trade and cultural transfer between India and Southeast Asia intensified. From the west, Islam spread across the lands bordering the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, from where it reached out into the Western Indic / Indian Ocean region (p. 138).

Around 950/1000, the maritime space became absorbed by the pull of the Far East, which held sway until 1350, under the leadership of the Song and Yuan, initially in Asia's eastern oceans and expanding across the South China Sea and the East Indonesian Seas, and then reaching further east. At the same time, trade links were extended across the Eastern Indic/Indian Ocean and beyond into the Western Indic/Indian Ocean, as far as the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, within the coordinates of Aden and Hormuz, Gujarat and Kerala, as depicted on the *Jiuling shouling tu*, a map dated 1125 (p. 170). Period sources report on improvements of the compass and inventions for navigating. For the Song economy, profits from overseas trade were substantial. Its pull effect made Hangzhou probably the biggest maritime entrepôt worldwide. The use of Song coins in Southeast Asia signals the start of monetization (p. 165).

Among the travellers and geographers was Wang Dayuan who, in the 1330s, reported in his *Daoyi zhilüe* about a Chinese pagoda built in 1267, during the Song Period, near Nagapattinam on India's Coromandel Coast (pp. 191–192). Towards the end of the thirteenth and early in the fourteenth centuries, when the Mongols ruled over China and Persia, the coasts of East Asia and Iran were under the control of one and the same power. Early in the fourteenth century, there were virtually no obstacles to maritime traffic between Quanzhou and the ports of West Asia (p. 204).

The following 150 years are characterized as an epoch of turning points in the course of fragmentation after the end of the Mongol domination (ca. 1350–1400). Of great significance was the Ming state-run seafaring, beginning early in the fifteenth century, upon the ascension of Emperor Zhu Di, known as the Yongle Emperor, in 1403, and the start of an enormous ship-building programme, resulting in numerous fleets, complete with 'treasure vessels' (*baochuan*) (p. 234). Among several admirals, Zheng He and Wang Jinghong gained lasting fame. Zeng He commanded seven large fleets across the 'Western Ocean' (*Xi yang*), 1405–1433. Most probably, priority was given to trade and diplomacy, with occasional military interventions of secondary importance. This is substantiated by the surge in tributary embassies received by Emperor Yongle, which characteristically also entailed private transactions. The author highlights innovations

created by that first-ever statal might ruling the seas of Asia, including political interventions far away from the power base, logistics, control of rear links, and state-run depots called 'official places' (*guanchang*) in such locations as Palembang, Kalikut or Melaka, or 'official islands' (*guanxu*) (pp. 241–242).

While the first to fourth decades of the fifteenth century saw the grand and mighty seaborne missions of the Ming crossing the oceans and calling on ports near and far, other seafarers also plied the various maritime segments from early in the fifteenth century onward. Increasingly, the Ryukyu Islands and Ayutthaya gained in importance.

A conspectus highlights two distinctive though related matters: the fundamental trends germane to Asians and Portuguese in the maritime world after 1500, and a comparison of the Ming state-run seafaring with the *Estado da Índia* of the Portuguese.

Virtually contravening the author's resolve to highlight the whole, precisely because it is more than the sum of its parts, a few salient points with a focus on the part of Southeast Asia that eventually constituted early Siam are highlighted here.

The Gulf of Siam was probably one of the busiest maritime trading zones for several centuries (p. 36). Chinese texts report on sea links across the 'Little Western Ocean' (*Xiao Xiyang*) with the east coast of the Malay Peninsula and onward via overland connections to its west coast, reasoning that vessels

from China could not directly navigate around its southern tip, owing to equatorial calms (pp. 38–39, 46). The Nan Yue Kingdom was in contact with the Malay Peninsula via seagoing vessels (p. 61). Han sources relate trade with Southeast Asia. References to the tanned seafarers of Southeast Asia (*Kunlun ren*) in Chinese texts attest to early Chinese scholars' interest in the maritime world and seaborne exchange (p. 65).

Chinese records contain intensive references to Srivijaya from the end of the seventh century (p. 122). Srivijaya re-activated older tributary contacts with China in the Early Song Period (p. 126). Song sources report on tribute embassies from Srivijaya during the tenth and eleventh centuries (p. 175). Zhu Yuanzhang sent delegations and received embassies from Zhenla, Angkor and Xianluo, the latter identical with the central region of present-day Thailand (pp. 221–222). These delegations presented sapan wood, elephants, ivory and spices, among other items (p. 222). In 1390, an embassy from Xianluo arrived with 80 tons of 'aromatic substances' presented as tribute, not including the huge volume of commodities for private transaction (p. 222).

This book is elegantly written and presented. Its content is structured for ease of comprehension of the enormously complex subject matter. Thematic maps focusing on essentials elucidate routes, linkages, activities and events, supplemented by attractive reproductions of illustrative historical maps. Pictures and sketches of boats, ships, or

vessels enhance the reader's perception. Two appendixes enrich the presentation, one describing commodities in great detail, and another introducing various types of ships and ship-building, complete with illustrations. Commodities discussed *in extenso* include cloves, nutmeg, camphor, various woods, spices, precious stones, animals, and many more. The reference literature (pp. 334–351) is categorized into larger regions and epochs, and compendia on themes or regions such as commodities and geographic areas. An elaborate index (pp. 355–368) listing topographical names, individuals, dynasties, empires, commodities and select subjects makes for a well-rounded presentation.

This is a superb book. It deserves to be translated into English for a certainly keen and large readership of scholars and interested lay persons.

Karl E. Weber

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Ian Harris, ed., *Buddhism, Power and Political Order*. London and New York, Routledge, 2007, 237 pp.

Ian Harris should be congratulated for his efforts to bring together a collection of fresh and thoughtful essays written by nine leading scholars working on Theravada Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia. Given the ongoing political crises in several Theravada Buddhist states, especially Burma, Cambodia, and Thailand, the release of this publication is intellectually relevant and timely.

This edited volume is the product of an intensive multidisciplinary symposium on the interface between religion and politics in Theravada South and Southeast Asia, which Harris organized in mid-April 2004 while serving as a senior scholar at the Becket Institute, St Hugh's College, Oxford University. The central theme of the volume deals with how and to what extent Theravada Buddhism has, as a religious institution and culture, interacted and negotiated with political and other forces of modernization, such as secular education, forms of governance, kingship, and post-colonial politics in mainland Southeast Asian countries (excluding Vietnam) since the late pre-modern period. It particularly focuses on the ways Theravada Buddhism has defined and redefined "a general concept of power conceived from a political perspective". (p.3)

Essays in this volume cover diverse subjects and different periods in political history of four modern nation-states. The quality of the contributions is rather

uneven. Although they are brought together under the common theme of Buddhism, power, and political order, individual authors discuss Theravada Buddhism from different entry points, historical periods, and disciplinary angles. It is difficult to pinpoint the central arguments in the volume, which begins with a discussion on comparative monastic education in Burma and Thailand. In Chapter One, "Idealism and Pragmatism: A Dilemma in the Current Monastic Education Systems of Burma and Thailand", Ven. Khammai Dhammasami discusses some common dilemmas of monastic education in Burma and Thailand, such as whether or not the Sangha should embrace secular Western subjects, which are denoted by the derogatory term of "animal sciences" (*tiracchanavija*), in their monastic curricula. Idealistic and pragmatic stances have emerged in both the Burmese and Thai Sangha regarding the goals and contents of monastic education. This dilemma is indicative of how Buddhist orders in both countries have been struggling to make themselves relevant in the modern world.

Burmese Buddhism and its role in politics are the contents in the next two chapters. In Chapter Two, "Rajadhamma Confronts Leviathan: Burmese Political Theory in the 1870s", Andrew Huxley provides an account of Burma's Buddhist political theory through works by U Kyaw Htun and U Hpo Hlaing. Huxley's essay is well documented and thoughtful. His attempts to reconstruct an unfinished work on traditional

Buddhist kingship written by leading Burmese Buddhist scholars demonstrate his own original scholarship. Through a careful reading of these indigenous scholars, Huxley argues that Burmese Buddhist scholars, at least in the nineteenth century, were highly conscious of radical political and economic changes in the modern world. Juliane Schober, in Chapter Three: "Colonial Knowledge and Buddhist Education in Burma", demonstrates how monastic education has been politicized by the government in Burma and how modern knowledge was incorporated into Buddhist curricula. Schober shows the consistent government manipulation of monastic education, as well as its attempts to reorient its purpose to serve the political status quo. Monastic education and Sangha affairs were always included as key elements in a national agenda and drew serious attention from the country's pre-modern and modern leaders.

The next two chapters deal with Buddhism and politics in postcolonial Cambodia. In Chapter Four, "Reconstructing the Cambodian Polity: Buddhism, Kingship and the Quest for Legitimacy", Peter Gyallay-Pap skillfully draws some theoretical implications out of case studies of Khmer Buddhist political culture and tries to understand why Western liberal or representative politics continue to be elusive in postcolonial Cambodia. He argues that any attempts to understand the political culture in Cambodia must include the Buddhist monarchy, the Sangha, and village-based society. In a way, Cambodia's model could provide

a criticism of the Western-centric paradigm of a liberal representative polity. John Marston, in Chapter Five, "The Cambodian Hospital for Monks", tells a story of how a Cambodian hospital for monks was built "at the moment of the country's independence" (p.104). He points out that the construction of a hospital was indeed a modern project embedded in Cambodia's traditional/pre-modern cultures and institutions of kingship and Buddhism. It serves as an example of how reformed Buddhism is consistent with specific visions of modernity in the country.

The volume includes two chapters on Lao Buddhism, which is usually a neglected area in the world of Theravada studies. Both chapters are concerned with the pre-modern Laos Buddhist kingship and prophetic literature of the Lao people residing on both sides of the Mekong. In Chapter Six, "Buddhism, Power, and Political Order in Pre-Twentieth Century Laos", Volker Grabowsky examines when and how Theravada Buddhism became the dominant religion and how it shaped the conceptions of kingship in pre-colonial Laos. He believes that Laos fully entered the Theravada world later than most neighboring polities. Rulers and elite had embraced the religion around the mid-fifteenth century. Lao kings took the concepts of righteous king (*dhammaraja*) and universal ruler (*cakkavartin*) seriously and the royal domains of land and manpower were crucial in the pre-colonial Lao Buddhist polity. In the following chapter, "Past, Present and

Future in Buddhist Prophetic Literature of the Lao”, Peter Koret deals with Lao prophetic Buddhist literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and considers how Buddhist Lao anticipated modernization and its consequences through prophetic literature. He argues that prophetic literature describing the decline of Buddhism illustrates the historical, cultural, and literary dimensions of the meaning of the future as prophesied in the past. This chapter is written more like a preliminary study and its analysis needs expansion.

The two final chapters consider topics on Thai Buddhist cultures from widely separated spectra. They discuss subjects as diverse as a contemporary cult of a Buddhist earth deity with fertility power and legal literature in pre-modern Siam. Elizabeth Guthrie in Chapter Eight, “In Defence of the Nation: The Cult of Nang Thoranee in Northeast Thailand”, argues that the beliefs and practices surrounding the cult of Nang Thoranee are embedded in contemporary Thai political and economic realities. The cult can be seen as one of many emerging nationalist cults in the midst of the country’s economic crisis and the Thais’ psychological despair at takeovers by foreign financial interests. This chapter is descriptive by nature with less illustrative theoretical and ethnographic analysis. The place of the cult of Nang Thoranee in the northeastern Thai popular religion is debatable, and so is its modern political significance.

The final chapter, “King, Sangha and Brahmans: Ideology, Ritual and Power

in Pre-modern Siam”, by Peter Skilling, presents a textual analysis of pre-modern Siamese ideals of political superstructure. He uses the model of the ritual state to explain how political ideologies of kinship, Buddhist monastic order, and Brahmans formed the hybrid complex cosmology for the Siamese ruling class. He argues that these combinations were distinctively Thai. Skilling includes the Brahmans into what otherwise is generally known as Buddhist polity and criticizes the concept of legitimizing power. His reading of Thai-language sources provides many new insights.

While one can admire the overall contributions in this volume to the field of Theravada Buddhist studies, it should be noted that the book has its disadvantages. The essays are not neatly tied together, and seem to be arranged rather by countries or bounded Buddhist traditions rather than scholarly themes. The related themes or contents in the individual essays are not always fully discussed in terms of theoretical or ethnographical comparison. The theoretical and empirical highlights need to be more substantially and intensively discussed right from the beginning. The volume does not situate itself firmly or critically within the contexts of contemporary scholarship in the field and the introductory chapter fails to address these needs.

*Buddhism, Power and Political Order* is, in spite of these criticisms, a timely and rich volume. Some of the individual chapters are stronger in their scholarship than others. The book remains a very

useful reader for students and others with a serious interest in the complex junctures between modern politics and the Theravada Buddhist worlds in mainland Southeast Asia.

Pattana Kitiarsa

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Nicol Guérin and Dick van Oenen, *Thai Ceramic Art – The Three Religions*. Singapore, Sun Tree Publishing, 2005, 310 pp., 439 colour plates, 396 figures and line drawings.

This beautifully illustrated book on Thai ceramics is extremely interesting and engaging. It takes a very different approach to the subject than previous studies. Roxanna Brown, in her earlier review in the September–October 2005 *Southeast Asian Ceramics Newsletter* has written, ‘It is a work of interpretation in contrast to past inventory-like books on Thai ceramics.’ The authors have examined ceramic production of the present-day Sukhothai region during the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries in the light of Thai history, culture and religion, with the focus of the work on the ‘ecclesiastical usage of Thai ceramics.’ Many new and stimulating ideas are introduced in the book; some are controversial and deserve serious discussion.

The complex history of the early Thai states and the influences that shaped their philosophies, politics and religions are presented in an interesting, sometimes lyrical, way. The evolution of Thai art, craft and architecture is discussed, with considerable detail devoted to the analyses of the motifs featured on the ceramics. The meaning of Thai figurative art has been the subject of much scholarly debate. The authors have examined a variety of ceramic vessels and figurines that may have been used in animist, Buddhist and Hindu ritual

processes. They have also tried to identify some of the personages depicted in ceramic sculpture by reference to their social milieu. Their findings are speculative and will no doubt generate debate.

This is a multifaceted study, covering a lot of ground in its ten chapters. The difficulty of dating Thai ceramics is addressed in an open manner, with an invitation to the reader to make adjustments should fresh evidence emerge. The approximate terminus date for Sawankhalok production is given as 1583, a date that is generally accepted.

The book has an encyclopaedic number of photographs and drawings of ceramic forms and decorative motifs; it is certainly the most comprehensive collection published to date and each topic is covered in depth. For example, there are many images of the traditional hunchback water droppers and related figures, including the fascinating but largely ignored representations of Chinese and other foreigners, perhaps merchants or emissaries who attended the Sukhothai and Sawankhalok courts. The Chinese and Thai figures are relatively easy to identify by their hair styles, costumes and facial features, but other people wear a variety of head-dresses and some have elongated bearded faces and slanted, almond-shaped eyes, suggesting that they could represent people from central or western Asia.

The authors have grouped Sukhothai province ceramics in a cultural context: 'Reliquary use, Religious use, Offering wares, Lustration wares, Semi Religious

Cult use and Animistic use'. A relatively limited number of figures and vessels have been associated with Buddhist or animist practice in the past. They include: temple guardians, *Naga* and *Makara* finials, ceramic sculptures of deities, elephants and architectural fittings, balustrades and lamps, stemmed *paan* or offering bowls and zoomorphic pouring vessels, or *kendi*. Many previous writers defined the myriad of small ceramic figurines of domestic and wild animals, including buffalo, elephants, ducks, chickens, anteaters, dogs, tigers and bears, as merely toys, but an exception is the doll-like male and female kneeling figures (often decapitated) holding infants. These are discussed extensively in the book and the 'decapitation theory' of the so-called *tukata* female and male figures is re-examined in some detail. The authors have again carefully associated the entire group of models with various religious practices. They also draw some interesting comparisons with related ceramics from China, Cambodia and India. A separate section examines animal figures associated with Thai Buddhism, especially elephants, but also monkeys, horses, deer and hares. A small but fascinating section follows on 'Anthropomorphic Figurines.'

The discussion of the large and expressive fragment of the ceramic image of the head of Buddha in the Sawankhalok Museum is particularly interesting. From the proportions of the face the authors calculated that the original seated figure would have been 1.705 metres high.

They compare the exaggerated arched eyebrows to a late Sukhothai style bronze sculpture described by Diskul in *Sukhothai Art* (fig. 60). The image of a torso of a crowned deity with Thai facial features, delicate moustache and beard on the dust jacket of the book is described as a 'royal figure.' It has an *urna* in the form of a spiral surmounted by a flame similar to the one on the brow of the face fragment of the Buddha. A similar design is found on early Sawankhalok 'fish and flower' decorated underglaze stoneware, where it is combined with a stylised 'Thai orchid tree flower' (*Bauhinia variegata*). The orchid trees with their striking purple flowers still grow close to the ancient kilns at Sawankhalok.

The book does not cover the considerable range of export wares from Sawankhalok and Sukhothai, produced, as Piriya Krairiksh wrote in his foreword, 'between the mid-fourteenth to mid-sixteenth century, at a time when Thailand was then a major centre of ceramic production in the world, second only to China.' But there is an overlap between the two streams of ceramic production. For example, underglaze decorated and monochrome stoneware covered boxes were exported to maritime Southeast Asia in huge quantities. Their form and the lotus bud handles on the lids appear to be derived from much earlier Indian turned-stone reliquary containers. The larger Thai boxes are often described as reliquary containers, but the only examples of ceramics used for burial purposes found by the Thai-Australian ceramic

research project at Sawankhalok during the 1980s were medium-sized jars. A shallow cemetery was discovered between kilns at Ban Ko Noi. The mainly unglazed stoneware baluster-shaped jars with flared mouths, sealed with inverted plain conical bowls, had been used for re-inhumation. They have been identified by Don Hein as Mon. Larger burial jars of a similar shape but with moulded decoration were made at the Supanburi kilns. Baluster jars are also the subject of a detailed study in the section on 'ecclesiastical vases' and their form is discussed in relation to Indian and Khmer types, especially *purnakalas*. Kendi, described in the book as 'lustration wares,' are another example of a ceramic type that could serve multiple roles. They were also exported in large numbers.

Both writers are passionate collectors of Thai ceramics and have spent several decades travelling the world to study public and private collections of Thai wares. Much of this is evident in the background research of the book. The preface refers to their own extraordinary collection — they have 'permanent access to about 800 pieces, few of which had been published before.'

Unfortunately the publisher has reproduced the map of Southeast Asia in small scale, making it impossible to read without a magnifying glass. A photograph of a reconstructed kiln, pl. 33, is at Sukhothai, not Ban Ko Noi. There are a number of attributions in the book that might be challenged, but that only makes the book more interesting.

The present work is definitely a ‘must’ for scholars and collectors of Thai and Southeast Asian ceramics.

Dick Richards

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Bhawan Ruangsilp, *Dutch East India Company Merchants at the Court of Ayutthaya: Dutch Perceptions of the Thai Kingdom, c. 1604-1765*. Leiden/Boston, Brill. 2007, 279 pp., EUR 73.-

Thai scholars who have managed to command the seventeenth and eighteenth century Dutch language sufficiently to get access to the sources of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) are rare indeed. Bhawan Ruangsilp might be the second scholar after Dhiravat na Pombejra who has done so. Her study covers the whole area of the VOC presence in Siam, which, however, does not mean that there is much overlap with the work done by others. The classical study in the field is without doubt George Vinal Smith’s work from 1977, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand*. Although its author seems to have disappeared from Thai Studies, everybody who works with the VOC sources about Siam still depends on his efforts. His well-documented presentation of the facts from the archives covers only the seventeenth century; Bhawan adds much original material from the later period between 1694 and 1765. But the main difference with Smith is in approach. Where Smith presents a reliable bone structure, the merit of Bhawan is that she has added some flesh.

Bhawan’s perspective is reflected in the word “perceptions” in the subtitle of her book. Perceptions she sees “as a ‘cognitive’, ‘active’, and ‘selective’ search of an ordered world” and perceiving is “an act of construction which is

guided by the pre-concept of the observer as well as influenced by the immediate circumstances around him" (p. 4). She wants to "ascertain how the VOC Dutch observers developed their process of understanding and representing the Siamese court, and what factors were decisive in the construction of Dutch knowledge" (p. 5). In this constructive approach Bhawan goes a step beyond presenting the "pure facts" and tries to see how these facts were formed and what processes produced them. While this intention might be too ambitious to realize completely, it certainly results in a method that differs from the older studies, Smith's in the first place.

Bhawan succeeds in giving a thematic structure to a book whose topic is unavoidably chronological. The book starts with a chapter that outlines the relatively equal positions of Company and Court in commerce, politics, and diplomacy. Chapter Two examines the position of the VOC men in Siam, with special attention to the question of their legal status within the jurisdiction of the Siamese court. Chapters Three and Four describe a twofold learning process of the Company men during the reign of King Prasat Thong. First, how they attempted to find a "common language" to share with their Thai hosts, which they found in the "language of ritual", and second, how they tried to understand the political culture and reality of Ayutthaya. Chapter Five examines the VOC–Siamese relationship during King Narai's reign, when changes in circumstances forced the Dutch in Siam to find

a strategy to cope with the new developments around the king, in particular the French presence and the political rise of Constantine Phaulkon. In Chapter Six we see how under King Phetracha the Dutch more and more withdrew and had to give up the favored position they had attained at the inception of the reign. Chapter Seven, the longest chapter, is devoted to the eighteenth century.

In this chapter historians of Thailand may find much material new to them. We find here also, probably for the first time, a clear account of the differences between the seventeenth and eighteenth century interaction between the Siamese and the Dutch. We see how Dutch presence and interaction changed, often in response to different political regimes. The VOC became less involved with the court and after 1690 the Dutch retreated into the background as observers. Bhawan talks of a growing sense of disillusionment between the Dutch and the Siamese during the eighteenth century as the possibility of gaining profit from mutual trade diminished. She lets us understand the eighteenth century VOC material more adequately. We may add here her general remark from the introduction (pp. 8–9) that, while in the seventeenth century the Europeans and the Thai were on a more or less equal level, European scientific advancement and the Enlightenment during the eighteenth century shaped the way the Dutch looked at Asian religions, life-styles and forms of government and gave rise to an increased sense of difference. Over the years "fixed Dutch/European

categories” of the Dutch perception of the Siamese court elite were created (p. 221). Does this imply that their perceptions became more prejudiced, with less space for inquisitive and sensitive individuals? And is it true that the more we enter the eighteenth century the more prejudiced perceptions became?

We learn from her book that we have to distinguish not only between the different periods, but also between the different VOC officials writing reports. This is well demonstrated by the difference in perception and observation of Joost Schouten’s description of court ritual during the reception of the Dutch Embassy in 1628 (pp. 52–62) and the indifferent account of the same topic prepared by Jan Joosten de Roij in 1633, who became irritated by the “unnecessary flatteries and lack of substance” in the correspondence (pp. 62–64). We understand that Schouten was a person of rather unique capacities. It was not VOC policy that made him into a detailed and sensitive observer; it was his own understanding and ambition. Nowhere can we find such a complete portrait of Joost Schouten as the one presented here. Apart from Schouten’s classical and well-known *Short Description of Siam*, his unpublished texts from the *dagregister* (daily journal) about the interactions with the court may in particular impress the reader and provide the core material for Chapters Three and Four about “learning the language of ritual” and “learning Siam’s politics.”

Well documented and described in detail are the various limitations the so-called unlimited power of the king was subjected to, in other words the limitations of Ayutthaya’s despotism. Although the courtiers had to suffer the king’s whims, they were also in a position to manipulate information to and from him (pp. 10–11). In 1634 Schouten therefore advised Van Vliet that the Dutch should not only treat the king but also his officials discretely. Ultimately “it was indeed negotiating and arranging with the King’s servants which consumed most of their time, eating it up even more than attending court events.” (p.103). Bhawan’s description of the ruler’s monopoly in trade, his imposing display of wealth, the measures the ruler had to take to prevent access to wealth on the part of his officials to protect his own central position, and the attempts of officials and nobles to accumulate wealth or power as soon as the opportunity arose – all this can serve as a textbook illustration of the centripetal and centrifugal tendencies of the mechanisms of Max Weber’s patrimonial bureaucracy.

Bhawan follows a statement from VOC director Coenraad van Beuningen, who in 1685 observed that the VOC was “not just a Company of commerce but also of state”. She points to the hybrid character of the VOC as a merchant-warrior, a commercial and a political institution. It is not surprising that we can distinguish the relations of the VOC with Asian states in (a) relations through “conquest of land or the coercion of

favorable trade conditions through the medium of violence” and (b) relations through gift-giving and diplomacy (p. 97). Siam obviously belonged to the second type. We would emphasize that this state-like character forced the VOC factory also to operate as part of a large bureaucratic machinery. Its functioning forced the officials to produce innumerable documents – and sometimes detailed accounts of daily events. The VOC men had continuously to inform their superiors in Batavia of the market situation and all political and social conditions that influenced the market. The material Bhawan had to study is without doubt also dry and boring, but its great merit is that it is close to reality. Like most travel accounts, it was not written to entertain a greater public. We find, therefore, almost eyewitness reports of many violent changes in the Ayutthaya regimes of this period: Joost Schouten about King Prasat Thong (1629), Volkerus Westervolt about King Narai (1656), Johannes Keyts about King Phetracha (1688), Arnout Cleur about King Prachao Sya (1703), Pieter Sijen about King Borommakot (1733), and Nicolaas Bang about Prince Thammathibet (1756–1757).

A fascinating addition to the literature is the way Bhawan has pulled together pieces of information into a description of the VOC settlement (pp. 41–53). This Dutch settlement had evolved to include not only the Company lodge but also an adjacent village, referred to with the Malay word *kampong*. Its population was composed of descendants of VOC

employees and the Dutch free burghers and, in greater number, indigenous people who were attracted because of the prospect of paid jobs and the protection which the Company could afford. Within the lodge the Dutch were more or less autonomous, but in practice they had jurisdiction over the whole settlement as well, an arrangement based on a common understanding through which they could offer a kind of immunity from local law enforcement. This Dutch settlement formed only a small section of the total Ayutthaya population, less than one percent, not more than 1,500 persons. To them the VOC fulfilled the role of a patron to dependent clients and, on the other hand, the VOC used them for all kinds of labor and services, as carpenters, coolies, rowers or sailors. Bhawan describes this with detailed information about daily affairs and has a good argument to qualify George Vinal Smith by emphasizing that the Dutch contacts went beyond the highest levels of court and *khunnang*. The Dutch also administered a small part of the population of Ayutthaya, although this became more and more evident in the course of the eighteenth century. Within this community intimate relations between the VOC men and Siamese women developed and this “cohabitation and miscegenation” has produced many mestizo children, some of whom later became a source of conflict between individual VOC men and the Siamese authorities. Only in rare circumstances were children allowed to follow their fathers to Batavia (pp. 51–52).

Bhawan's study demonstrates that doing an archival study is like interviewing. The answers one gets depend highly on the questions and the perspective of the researcher. She has looked differently to more or less the same sources as others did before her. The result is a study that cannot be disregarded by anyone who has a serious interest in the history of Ayutthaya. Its importance goes far beyond Dutch–Thai relations. Her sources are so close to reality that she could write a book that sometimes has the character of an ethnographic study.

Han ten Brummelhuis

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*A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655: Extracts from the Journal of Gijbert Heeck.* Translated and introduced by Barend Jan Terwiel, transcribed from the handwritten Dutch manuscript by Renée Hoogenraad. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2008, v+124 pp., pb, ill.

The history of Thailand during the Ayutthaya period (c. 1350–1767) is known for the paucity of contemporary indigenous written sources. Historians are often obliged to consult foreign, especially Western, records in which the kingdom of Ayutthaya was known as Siam. Generally consulted, because they are already published and translated into English and/or Thai, are the accounts by French missionaries and diplomats. In recent years, a few more European source publications have appeared, such as the collection of writings by the Dutch merchant Jeremias van Vliet (2005), and the records of the English East India Company in Siam (2007). Among the Western sources, Dutch records are probably the most extensive, but still very much under-explored and less accessible except to a limited number of researchers who read Dutch. To improve the situation, Dutch and Thai scholars have combined forces to make Dutch historical texts accessible to a broader public. The volume under review is the first in the series of source publications by the Editorial Committee for VOC Texts about Siam. Barend Jan Terwiel, one member of the committee, undertook the task to translate and introduce the journal of Gijbert Heeck.

Gijsbert Heeck was a medical attendant in the service of the VOC (the Dutch East India Company), which operated in the kingdom of Ayutthaya from 1604 to 1765. He originally wrote this journal during his two-month visit to Ayutthaya in 1655. The introduction by Terwiel explains the discovery of the manuscript. The text was first published in 1910–1911 in its original language, with many omissions. The version under review presents the first publication of the full text, both in original Dutch and in English translation.

The journal has two levels. Firstly, it is an account of what Heeck observed each day in Siam. Secondly, the author expands his story by adding some information and assumptions with reference to his previous knowledge. Heeck's powers of observation and representation give a vivid picture of seventeenth century Siam.

In the introduction to the book, Terwiel points out the value of Heeck's journal for Thai history in several areas: foreign relations of Siam regarding the Dutch and the Portuguese; historical geography of the lower Chao Phraya River; gender studies; Dutch settlements and technology transfer in Siam; and social and cultural life of Ayutthaya. But Terwiel also reminds the readers of the limitation of Heeck's powers of observation. The journal betrays its author's lack of understanding or appreciation in particular when it concerns the indigenous court and religious rituals and beliefs. While the Siamese King (Prasatthong) is portrayed as

despotic and cruel, Buddhist monks are called "disciples of Satan". (p. 42) Still, Siam's material wealth, such as expressed in the construction of temples, managed to impress the Dutchman. It is typical for European observers of Asia in Heeck's time to refer to their superiority based on their adherence to Christianity, but often to be awed by the material prosperity of the East. After all, one must also bear in mind that Heeck's intolerance was not directed only at some habits of the Siamese, but is also shown in his harsh judgment of his colleague Joost Schouten, who was executed in Batavia for having committed sodomy, an act considered as offending God.

The journal provides some information on Siam's foreign trade policy (including bans of export of wood and rice), and more extensively on the microeconomics (petty trade) of the kingdom. The author records the practice of various professions in the region between the capital city and the mouth of the Chao Phraya River: farming, potting, woodcutting, boatbuilding, the cultivation of fruit plantations, etc.

Heeck's journal is very informative if one wants to study the state of relations between different groups in Siamese society. It suggests several levels of unequal and exploitative relationships between the king and his subjects, between the court elite and commoners, between the Dutch Company and the Siamese court, and between VOC European employees and their indigenous female partners. Having related

an act of open hostility between the Dutch and the Portuguese at the river mouth in the beginning of his journal, Heeck then describes the actual relations between the Dutch and the Portuguese living in Ayutthaya as a “Machiavellian friendship”. (p. 61)

This translation of Gijsbert Heeck’s journal has been executed with great care and accuracy. Baas Terwiel has done terrific work in interpreting and identifying Dutch corruption of Thai words. The VOC maps and illustrations reproduced here are of good quality and very useful. This book and the above-mentioned recent publications on this topic will help broaden new horizons in the study of Ayutthayan history. It is also valuable for those who are interested in historical European perceptions of the East, *inter alia*. We look forward to reading the next book in this series, the account of another VOC employee, Cornelis van Nijenrode, from the year 1621.

Bhawan Ruangsilp

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Anthony Farrington and Dhiravat na Pombejra, eds, *The English Factory in Siam 1612–1685*, 2 vols. London, British Library, 2007, 1,439 pp.

Almost a century ago, as part of Prince Damrong’s project to give Siam a western-style national history based on source materials, five volumes of selected seventeenth-century records copied from western archives were printed by the Wachirayan Library in both English and Thai. For some reason, the selection was rather over-weighted with documents on the English East India Company (EIC), and the collection has since been a major source for studies on early relations between England and Siam. In this new publication, Anthony Farrington, scholar and archivist, has taken the EIC documents from the Wachirayan collection and added another two hundred sources. Some of the additions are complete documents, while many others are extracts which refer to Siam and the EIC. Most of these additions come from the India Office Records. A few are from other collections in the British Library, from the Records of Fort St George (Madras), from published anthologies such as Purchas and Hakluyt, and from the British Public Record Office. The editors state, ‘The aim of the present collection has been to trace all surviving material on the English factory in Siam and to present it, as far as possible, in its original form.’ The 759 documents, running to 1,300 pages, must be an exhaustive compilation of seventeenth-

century records on Siam and the EIC. Dhiravat na Pombejra has contributed an introduction which elegantly summarizes the story told in these sources. The two editors have added many useful footnotes, biographical notes on over fifty of the main characters involved, a glossary of places and obscure terms, a bibliography, and an index.

In truth, the EIC played a rather minor part in the story of Siam in the age of commerce, and Siam played rather a minor part in the story of the EIC. In terms of trade at Ayutthaya, the English trailed some way behind the Dutch, Portuguese, Japanese, Moors and (for a short time) the French. The EIC probably trailed somewhat behind the English 'interlopers' or private traders. The EIC had a factory in Ayutthaya only for the two short periods of 1612–27 and 1674–85. On both occasions, the factory had hardly opened before the head office in London wanted to close it. The venture never turned in a profit. Most of the documents in this collection are about efforts to clear up some mess or disaster – debts, personal squabbles, political crises, shipwrecks, deaths, arson, and corruption. When the men-on-the-spot contemplated returning to Ayutthaya after the cataclysm of 1688, London snapped at them, 'Syam never did nor never will bring the Company twopence advantage, but many thousands of pounds loss... and therefore spend none of our money about it.'

D. K. Bassett has written a series of scholarly studies on the EIC and Siam which probably amount to all the atten-

tion that the subject deserves. The enormous benefit from this comprehensive and convenient collection will probably accrue to studies of other topics, including Siam, Pattani, and Asian trade in general.

The documents fall into three main clusters.

In the first cluster of records from the 1610s, there is a fragmentary view of the importance and unique character of Pattani. We see the queen as an active merchant, buying up languishing stocks of cloth from English merchants at knockdown prices, lending them money at very profitable rates, and gouging them with port taxes. We also see her entertaining the foreigners: on one occasion, 'all the gentilitie were commanded to dance, from the greatest to the smallest, or att leaste to make a shewe or demonstration thereof, which caused no small laughter;' and at another 'there was played a commedye all by women.' There is also a description of a slave revolt, which ended with much of the town burnt to the ground. Such regal trade, jolly entertainment, and rebelliousness were probably all much more common than most of the sources and historical writings convey.

The second cluster of records concerns the Company's first sojourn at the Siamese capital. By 1618, the Englishmen on the spot had concluded that Ayutthaya had more potential than Pattani or any other port on the mainland. But for European traders, Siam had very little produce they wanted to buy, and very few people to whom they

could sell. The port was primarily an entrepôt, a point of exchange between east and west. For Siam, European traders were useful if they came with goods that added something to the market. For the kings, they were a bonus if they had soldiers and weapons which the kings could use against rivals and rebels. But the English brought little to this party. They imported some Indian cottons which had many rival suppliers. They did a little gun-running, but never offered the kings any troops. They were too late to muscle into the Siam-Japan trade, which gave the Dutch their profits. They were really only petty hustlers on the fringes of Southeast Asian commerce.

The frisson in reading the 1620s documents comes from watching the Company merchants gaily cheating one another. A ship is dispatched from Ayutthaya to the Company trader in another Asian port. Months later a letter is received lamenting that on arrival the hides had all been eaten by worms and the spices damaged by sea water or rats. As a result the sales proceeds are regrettably much less than expected.... Not very surprisingly, when two or three of these merchants chanced to meet in the same port, the dinner inevitably turned into a brawl with sword fights, gun play, and challenges to duelling.

Most of the documents (900 of the 1,300 pages) fall into the third cluster, about the fifteen years from the Company's return to Ayutthaya in 1674 to the aftermath of King Narai's death and Phetracha's coup in 1688.

In this period, the Company did at least have a strategy. First, it refocused on Pattani and other peninsular ports as the first stages of the events which would eventually create British Malaya. Second, it hoped to profit more from the Bay of Bengal trade and hence took special interest in the port of Mergui.

But the Company did not put the resources behind these ambitions. Both plans exploded in their faces. The Company was outplayed at Mergui by the Moors and the locals, resulting in the massacre of 1687. Siam and the Company declared war on one another and indulged in competitive piracy. When Ayutthaya discovered that the Company was probably gun-running to Pattani and other truculent tributaries on the peninsula, the Company introduced a smart Greek to cover this up by schmoozing the Ayutthayan court and officialdom. Through language skill and native cunning – two qualities which the Company bosses in Siam seem to have totally lacked – Phaulkon was soon lording it over his former employer. Through these documents, we watch Phaulkon's rise and fall from the jaundiced but intimate standpoint of the Company's men in Ayutthaya.

Phaulkon spirited goods away from the Company warehouse while having the Company's books doctored to show the goods were lost at sea, sold to phantom buyers, or greatly depreciated because of damage. When challenged, Phaulkon brazenly accused the Company of 'endeavouring to staine my credit & reputation with scurrilous and

scandalous reports,' while casually mentioning 'the great trade I managed for His Imperiall Majestie my Great Master' in case the Company should dream of seeking any official redress. Two months later the Company's godown was gutted by fire, but it is impossible to tell whether this was Phaulkon's intimidation, an inside job, or sheer drunken carelessness. A Company man who called Phaulkon 'a Greek powder monkey' finished up in the stocks, subject to public ridicule. By 1687, there were fifty Englishmen employed by Phaulkon in the service of Siam – far more than ever worked for the Company in Siam. The King of England ordered them all to resign, without any apparent effect.

The final sections of this publication reprint several pamphlets issued in London on the backwash of the Mergui massacre and the events of 1688. Some of these have appeared elsewhere, but others are less accessible, and read together they nicely present the sequence from charge through counter-charge to character assassination, legal threat, and philosophical lament – 'we live in a profligate age which doth produce new prodigies of vilany.'

One measure of the English lack of interest in Siam is that these 1,300 pages of documents contain no significant description of Siam, Ayutthaya, or the Siamese, except a short one filched from the Dutch. This contrasts to the many writings by the Dutch, French, Portuguese, Japanese, and Persians on Siam, and to the voluminous writings by the British on India. There is also very little

narrative of political events in Siam, and only of a superficial nature, except in some of the 1688 pamphlets.

One clarification. On pp. 1371–2, there is a table labelled 'Ship arrivals and departures Madras/Siam 1689–1750,' with no explanation of the source of the data or its significance. The editors tell me that the information was compiled from shipping movements at Madras recorded in the Diaries and Consultations of the Madras Council (India Office Records, series G/19), and that the table shows that English country trade ships continued to visit Siam after 1688 until the final years of Ayutthaya.

The East India Company is the focus of this collection because the Company had an institutional presence much more important than its Siam operation, and because it had a system for record-keeping. But, as Dhiravat points out in his Introduction, the non-Company 'country traders' or 'interlopers' were probably much more important but are much more difficult to study. These two volumes contain glimpses of these figures. They also contain a huge amount of data, including several very detailed trade accounts, and some fascinating material on currencies and exchange rates, which will help a broader understanding of Southeast Asian trade in this era.

Chris Baker

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Anthony Farrington, ed., *Low's Mission to Southern Siam, 1824*. Bangkok, White Lotus, 2007, x + 126 pp. Price not given.

Not content with producing, with Dr Dhiravat na Pombejra, the magnificent two-volume compendium of texts in *The English Factory in Siam 1612–1685* in 2007, the now retired deputy director of the British Library in charge of the India Office and Oriental collections, Anthony Farrington, has also found the time to publish in the same year a slim volume detailing James Low's abortive mission to Nakhon Sithammarat in 1824.

Low was an unusual character. Along with Henry Burney, he was the only officer in the Indian army who bothered to learn both Malay and Siamese; Low produced the first account of Siamese literature (reproduced in *JSS* 2007) and the first grammar of Siamese in a Western language. Sent on a mission to what was known to foreigners as Ligor, and simply Nakhon to locals, to find out if support might be forthcoming from its 'rajah' in the form of boats to supplement the planned British attack on Burma, Low was also deputed to discover the extent of the writ of its quasi-feudal ruler. During the course of the mission it became very clear that the 'rajah', unlike the Malay kinglylets further south, was entirely subject to the rule of the 'Emperor of Siam', and did not dare make a move without the agreement of his overlord.

In fact, on this mission Low was not given permission to travel overland to

Ligor, and never met the 'rajah', but only his youthful son, who proved surprisingly competent a diplomat. Low refused to divulge the subject of his request to meet his father, and reasonably enough the 'rajah' refused to move and meet him until the subject was revealed. So Low hung out in the Trang River and sent numerous missives to Nakhon, while the Siamese played the long-trying game of polite delay and inaction. The British had declared war on Ava on 5 March 1824, the *causis belli* being frontier incursions into India, and by 10 May were in complete possession of Rangoon. By then, the need for supplementary boats had passed; so had the need for support in any form from Siam, and the limited authority of Ligor's 'rajah' had also become obvious.

All this is detailed in this delightful little book. It takes the form of a general introduction to Low, his report of his Mission, dated 1 August 1824, the journal of his mission from 5 May to 8 August in that year, and relevant official correspondence from March to July 1824, which starts off with a 'Secret Letter from the Governor General of India in Council', Calcutta, 12 March 1824, to the Governor of Penang, announcing 'the declaration of hostilities' with the state of Ava, the anticipated need of boats, and the possible occupation of Tavoy, Mergui and Junk Ceylon (Phuket) – the last-named not to be.

The book concludes with a bibliography of Low's extensive writings and cartographic work in the region, helpful end notes, and an index.

Unlike the French expeditions of 1685 and 1687-8, Low had the good sense to take along an artist, probably recruited in Penang, Bun Khong, whose works, reproduced elsewhere by the late Henry Ginsburg, are charming Siamese examples of the Company School. The Low album in the British Library shows details of a Buddha statue being carried in procession, which has often been reproduced; there is also a pencil drawing of a Ramayana performance which Low witnessed on 4 June at Phangnga, and one of the arrival at Trang harbour of 'the Boota or Boot', i.e. the son of the 'Prince of Ligor' on 24 June 1824.

Low, well known for his maps and indeed enriched by them (he was granted 2,000 Spanish dollars for his map of Siam, Cambodia, and Laos presented to the Penang government in April 1824), is not so well served here. The 1824 map of Siam reproduced in this volume is on too small a scale to be of much use. A detailed one of southern Siam (or an enlargement of the 1824 map of this part of the country) would have been useful for current readers. The cover of this volume, though, an enhanced version of the now faint drawing (found on p. 12) of Low's meeting with the Boota, is extremely successful.

It becomes a pleasure to read Low's elegant, some might say pompous prose, though while accepting that 'gratulating under the idea' or 'two inosculating streams' are terms that could be expressed more directly, it is better than certain would-be with-it historians' use of terms like trope, Other, oecumene, or

topos. Even Low has lapses, though, as with 'to distinctly understand' (p. 8).

Low returns several times to his belief that the Malays of southern Siam 'detest and fear the Siamese', though offers little proof of this. There was, of course, no love lost for the Burmese, and what he terms 'man-stealing', a long-practised occupation, remained common: 'the Siamese have carried many thousands of Burman families into captivity'. He was probably right to believe that the Siamese 'entertain [the notion] that the attack on Ava is only a prelude to one upon Siam.' Like so many of his time – though, in the end, not of the authorities in Calcutta – he is convinced that 'Salang' (i.e. Junk Ceylon, otherwise Phuket) and its inhabitants would be better off 'if placed by negotiation under British rule... diffusing happiness, the chief end of good government', a thought, fortunately for the Thai treasury today, which remained no more than that.

He carefully explores the coast and details the products and economy of the different southern provinces coming under the governancy of Nakhon. There is a good deal of information here about the west coast, in particular Phangnga and Phuket, which were virtually depopulated and unknown at the time.

As an observer, he is often acute, and was very aware of the evils of corvée labour, leaving the women to work the fields as well as cope with household and family chores. He notes that the Chinese are very leniently taxed, in part

because they contribute to the flow of funds to Bangkok.

In short this is a very good read, and while one must be thankful that his expedition bore no fruit, one must also be grateful for his having left so fascinating a record of it.

Michael Smithies

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Tamara Loos, *Subject Siam: Family, Law, and Colonial Modernity in Thailand*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2006, 234 pp., Bt 625.

In *Subject Siam*, Dr Tamara Loos examines changes in family law in Thailand, formerly Siam, beginning in 1855, when Rama IV signed the first of several unequal treaties with foreign powers, and ending in 1935 when the government finally promulgated the family law code. In this period, at the behest of the crown, Siamese jurists who had studied abroad and various foreign legal experts rewrote Siamese family law. In the newly incorporated Muslim south, the country's rulers created separate 'native' courts for the application of Islamic family law, modelled after colonial forms of jurisprudence in neighbouring British Malaya. In the rest of the kingdom, after much debate, Siamese legal reformers eventually abolished polygyny and established monogamous marriage as the legal norm, following the conventions established by Siam's neighbouring imperial powers. The debate over polygyny had important implications for the legal definition of a legitimate wife and the inheritance of wealth and status. After legal reforms in the reign of Rama VI, ideal male citizens were those who had stable marriages with "honorable" women, not with harlots, prostitutes, or mistresses. According to Dr Loos, family law was "the pivotal arena in which the leaders of Siam negotiated modernity, proved its

‘civilized’ status to foreign powers, and legislated the meanings of modernity to its subjects” (p. 3).

Dr Loos supports her arguments with court cases drawn from the records of the Dika Court, the court of final appeal. This is because “all case records from courts of the first instance, including those decided in the Islamic courts, are burned after ten years unless they have been appealed to higher-level courts” (p. 25). Dr Loos acknowledges that these cases are in some sense unique and that it is “doubly difficult to argue that conclusions drawn from them apply broadly to Siamese society.” She contends, however, that these records give “access to the lives, loves, and concerns of those – criminals, the lower classes, women, and others – who have not otherwise merited attention in Siam’s histories.” (p. 26) These people still receive disappointingly little attention in this book, however. *Subject Siam* is “not a study of legal subjectivity ... of how litigants understood laws and engaged the legal system” (p. 25). It presents very little, therefore, from the points of view of those ordinary Siamese whose most intimate affairs – whose marriages, divorces, inheritances, romantic and sexual lives – were profoundly shaped by the kingdom’s changing legal environment.

This is perhaps because so much space in *Subject Siam* is devoted instead to mechanical genuflections and ostentatious gropings at the rosary beads of “postcolonial” theory: gender, law, heterosexuality, transnationalism,

cosmopolitanism, globalization, and modernity. Almost every fashionable topic gets a nod. Of all of these, however, Dr Loos seems most obsessed with the concept of modernity. Indeed, she is practically feverish with it. She uses the word seven times on p. 3, at least 76 times by the end of the introduction. She makes the concept do an enormous amount of work – sometimes it is the object of explanation, sometimes it is that which is supposed to explain, very often it is simply “negotiated,” whatever that means. The concept is so important to her discussion that it is worth paying it closer attention here.

Dr Loos admits that modernity is “notoriously difficult to define” (p. 19), but proceeds to do so anyway. She immediately gets into a muddle. First she tells us that “Allusions to European modernity ... refer to an archetype of modernity – one that never existed, even in Europe, except as an ideal” and that “this paradigm of modernity was transported throughout the world by colonialism as a conceptual model.” However, in the next paragraph she tells us that “modernity refers to inseparable political, economic, social, and cultural processes – all of which evolved in relation to colonial conquest – that developed in eighteenth-century Western Europe.” Modernity slips from referring to an “archetype,” a “paradigm,” and a “conceptual model,” none of which are the same thing, to referring to a series of “inseparable ... processes” (p. 19).

Dr Loos develops a definition of modernity from a mish-mash of writings

by other scholars, most notably Dipesh Chakrabarty. The philosophical rationale of modernity, she writes, “included the doctrine of progress, rationality, secularity, individualistic understandings of the self, mastery over the forces of nature by human knowledge, and the abolition of ‘superstition.’” Economically, she contends, “modernity refers to the global expansion of trade, capitalist development, and the institutionalization of market-driven economies, products, material wealth, and consumption.” Politically, “modernity’s transformations include the shifts from absolutism, religious rule, and feudalism, to secularity, bureaucratically administered states, popular forms of government, rule of law, and territorial sovereignty that are characteristic of the nation-state” (p.19). From this definition of modernity, Dr Loos develops the concepts of “alternative modernity” and “colonial modernity.” “Alternative modernity” refers to an “historically contingent and contextually specific formulation of modernity,” modelled after, yet formulated against, European “modernity,” while “colonial modernity” emphasizes “the fact that most countries around the globe experienced modernity under the radically asymmetrical global conditions of imperialism” (pp. 20–21).

All this raises several problems. For a book concerned with “modernity” in Thailand, and one allegedly “attuned to the specificities of cultural practices” in that country (p. 19), it is astonishing that *Subject Siam* contains no discussion of the Thai concepts of “modernity”

(*kwampensamaimai*, *kwamtansamai*), or their cognates, “modern” (*samaimai*, *tansamai*), or “to modernize” (*tamhaitansamai*, *tamhaipensamaimai*). These words do not appear in the glossary or the index. In fact, Dr Loos gives no account of what Siamese rulers, jurists, intellectuals, or anyone else for that matter meant when they used the word “modernity”, or how they related it to issues of the family and legal reform. In fact, it is not clear from her discussion that anyone in Thailand ever believed in an idea of modernity remotely like the one she has assembled, let alone an “alternative modernity.” This would not be important if Dr Loos intended “modernity” only as an analytical category, though even then it has grave shortcomings. The definition she cobbles together is easily open to dispute as including too much or too little, as being too vague, too Eurocentric, or as not describing a condition that ever obtained in Europe, let alone elsewhere. Dr Loos’s concept of colonial modernity is also of very dubious value since there is nothing inherently colonial about modernity nor modern about colonialism. Indeed, many colonial situations were profoundly non-modern, even by her own criteria. The notion of alternative modernity is equally problematic. On one hand, it is not clear why an alternative modernity should be called a modernity at all. If any form of innovation produces a modernity, then the term can be of little analytical value. On the other hand, if alternative modernities are formulated against a European moder-

nity, it is not clear where the boundary lies between their being non-modern and alternatively modern. What Dr Loos really needs is not alternative modernities but alternatives to modernity as an analytical concept. Indeed, it is of such little value and it is so poorly discussed that the book would be improved if the entire section on “Alternative Modernities” (pp. 18–24) were removed.

If *Subject Siam* is conceptually weak, the empirical support for many of its claims is correspondingly feeble. This is particularly evident in the third chapter, “Colonial Law and Buddhist Modernity in the Malay Muslim South” (pp. 72–99), in which Dr Loos argues that Siam “both suffered under a plural legal system imposed by imperial powers and simultaneously forced a plural legal system on the Muslim population in the South” (p. 74). By “the South,” Dr Loos means Patani, “the historical areas encompassed by the present day provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat” (p. 74). In her discussion of Islamic family courts there in the early twentieth century, she is undeterred by the facts that “the main documents extant ... are ephemeral Thai language reports written by ... officials who came predisposed to interpret the methods of local administration as barbaric,” (p. 89) and that “no Siamese documents on the Muslim practice of polygyny exist from this period” (p. 89). Dr Loos offers her own innovative but methodologically questionable solution, writing that “because of a lack of sources about turn-of-the-century Patani, sources on

Kelantan are used to speculate about social and religious life in Patani” (p. 89). If this were not enough to cast doubt on the claims she makes, Dr Loos then fails to cite any primary sources on Kelantan in the Arkib Negara Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, or the Public Records Office, Kew Gardens, and instead cites decades-old secondary sources by William Roff (1974) and W.A. Graham (1908). Furthermore, because she was denied access to documents relating to Patani in the National Archives in Bangkok, Dr Loos instead relies heavily on a Thai master’s thesis from Sri Nakharinwirot University by Somchot Ongsakun, *Kan-patirup kanpok-khrong monthon pattani (p.s. 2449–2474)* (The Administrative Reform of Monthon Pattani [1906–1931]) (1978), “which utilizes sources from this archive” (p. 74, fn. 7), though obviously in an abridged and highly selective fashion. While problems with the use of sources in this chapter are particularly acute, they are symptomatic of others found throughout the book.

The writing in *Subject Siam* is less than limpid. It is filled with awkward, lumbering, crook-backed sentences. Dr Loos writes, for example, that “While the notion of alternative modernity acknowledges the indispensability of European political thought to representations of non-European political modernity, it refutes the value-ridden historicism embedded in defining people, practices, and concepts as non- or premodern that serve to delimit the term *modernity*” (p. 20, emphasis in original).

Even short sentences are often hopelessly vague, such as “The incongruities and global migrations of colonial translations and knowledge production abound” (p. 30). Sentences are often crammed with obscure and annoying jargon, such as “instantiations of modernity” (p. 19), “acts of transgressing social status” (p. 37), “Euro-American imperial discourses” (p. 119), and “polygyny’s multivocality” (p. 182). Many of the images Dr Loos conjures are confused and imprecise. In one early paragraph, for example, she writes that “law was the pivotal arena in which the leaders of Siam negotiated modernity...” (p. 3), and later in the same paragraph that “law, more than any other domain, provided the overarching penumbra under which other negotiations ... about the meanings of modernity took place” (p. 3). It is difficult to imagine, however, what could possibly pivot, or turn, upon an arena or how the law provided an encompassing “partially shaded area” in which modernity was negotiated. What it seems Dr Loos wants to say is that legal reform was “crucial” or “important” to Siamese attempts to become “modern,” however they conceived that term. Dr Loos seems to have given little thought to her choice of words. When she writes that “Polygyny existed as Siam’s source of distinction in the eyes of imperial power and as a crucible through which the country would prove, through the abolition of polygyny and the adoption of monogamy, its transition to modernity” (p. 110), by “crucible” she apparently

means something like “instrument” or “method.”

Dr Loos claims that *Subject Siam* is “the first book-length study that integrates court cases, as well as legal codes, into Siam’s history, and among the first to analyze gender and families as categories with a history” (p. 25). It is a pity, therefore, that it is so conceptually flawed, empirically weak, and poorly written. Scholars of social and legal history need to subject Siam to much more careful study.

Haydon Cherry

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Han ten Brummelhuis, *King of the Waters: Homan van der Heide and the origin of modern irrigation in Siam*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2007, xvi+409 pp., Bt 695.

The core of this important work of scholarship is an account of the years spent in Siam by J. Homan van der Heide, the Dutch irrigation engineer who was engaged by the government in 1902 to survey Siam's needs and prospects and to draw up plans for irrigation in the lower Menam delta. This core, focused on irrigation, is preceded by three remarkable chapters in which Brummelhuis surveys the social, economic, and political background of "Old Siam". These chapters and, indeed, the entire book are the fruits of the author's years of research into both archival and secondary sources, especially recent works by Thai and other scholars. Along the way he provides us with valuable commentary on the historiography of Siam.

The title comes from an occasion in which King Chulalongkorn introduced van der Heide to a guest as "King of the Waters". In addition to a recognition of his eminence in irrigation, this may have been a sly allusion to the belief in seventeenth century Siam that the Dutch had no country of their own but lived on ships as landless buccaneers.

In Old Siam, Brummelhuis argues, there was no real irrigation in the modern sense, nor was there much need of it. Rice farmers grew just enough rice for their own needs, and to pay

the land tax. The klongs that were dug during this period were primarily for transportation, though farmers did draw water from them into their fields. But after about 1850, when trade increased dramatically (coincidentally with the Bowring Treaty, says Brummelhuis), the variation in rainfall and frequent crop failures aroused interest in irrigation. Crop failures reduced rice exports and led to unwelcome decreases in government revenues. After a valuable survey of the Chakri reforms made in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Brummelhuis says these reforms strengthened the central government and made it more capable of undertaking irrigation projects.

King Chulalongkorn, impressed with irrigation systems he had seen during his travels in Europe and Java, began in the 1890s to encourage a study of the situation in Siam. Prince Damrong and other ministers shared this interest, and it was decided to search for a Dutch irrigation expert – specifically a *Dutch* engineer in accord with Siam's policy of hiring foreign advisers from several different countries.

So it was that Homan van der Heide was hired. Brummelhuis describes his arrival in Bangkok in June 1902 and his energetic beginning. With the help of W.A. Graham, R.A. Gilpin and others, van der Heide studied existing data on water. He traveled extensively into the country, measured flows of rivers and streams, and calculated distances and elevations. He also talked with rice farmers and local officials. He visited

the Rangsit area, where the Siam Lands, Canals, and Irrigation Company (Borisat) had dug a system of *klong*, but he stated that this was not irrigation at all, just water distribution, and that it had several problems (the powerful Borisat was a private company controlled by high-ranking members of the elite). The company had been given the right to dig these *klong* in a large unpopulated area east of the Chao Phya River and to claim the land on either side of them to a distance of 40 *sen*. It made large profits from the sale of this land. Van der Heide later opposed the Borisat's plan to expand its operation into the west bank.

Soon after his arrival, van der Heide began sending reports on his activities and findings to the Minister of Agriculture, Chao Phya Thewet, who forwarded them to other ministers and to the king, who was impressed with his energy. On one of these early reports, King Chulalongkorn noted, "He is exceptionally industrious!", as indeed he was.

In December 1902, just six months after his arrival, van der Heide completed his 200-page "General Report on Irrigation and Drainage in the Lower Menam Delta", a remarkable achievement in such a short time. Brummelhuis summarizes the General Report, which lays out an ambitious plan to bring the great Chao Phya River under control and irrigate nearly all of the rice-growing area of the delta. It would require a large investment and ten years to complete.

The General Report was not limited to technical analysis of the irrigation

system; van der Heide also discussed at length the many economic and social benefits that would accompany irrigation. These went far beyond simply reducing the frequency of crop failure, and he used cost/benefit analysis to make the case that the project could be made to pay for itself. Government revenues would rise from increased taxes, water tolls and transport charges. He argued that the whole project should yield a net return to the government.

Much of the rest of this book is concerned, one way or another, with the debate over van der Heide's Great Scheme, or some smaller variation of it. Brummelhuis takes the reader through this debate, using his archival research to show the parts played by different participants. In the process he provides fascinating glimpses into the workings of the Siamese bureaucracy.

La Mahotièrre, a French engineer responsible for Bangkok's water supply, strongly opposed van der Heide's scheme, and wrote a long memo criticizing it. Van der Heide quickly wrote a fiery rebuttal. W.A. Graham, an English adviser to the the Ministry of Agriculture, strongly favored the Great Scheme. He praised van der Heide's use of economic analysis, and even suggested that the irrigation plan could also take care of Bangkok's need for a potable water supply and render unnecessary the railway to Uttaradit (because of improved water transportation). Brummelhuis notes that "there is not a single hint that Graham's staunch support for Homan van der Heide had any effect at all." The

financial adviser, Rivett-Carnac, flatly opposed any irrigation activity at all “for many years to come,” a total reversal of his previous position. Meanwhile, Thewet equivocated, not knowing what to make of it all.

The matter was referred to a distinguished special committee made up of the ministers most directly concerned: Princes Damrong (Interior), Thewawong (Foreign Affairs), Mahit (Finance), Narit (Local Government), and Chao Phya Thewet (Agriculture). A commoner, Chao Phya Thewet, was uncomfortable in that group.

Van der Heide took an active role in the protracted debate, and Brummelhuis makes it clear that his personality became an important factor. He was a very stubborn and determined man, but he also lacked tact and was ill-mannered by Siamese standards. These traits damaged his effectiveness.

Brummelhuis tells us that as decision time approached, “ubiquitous caution prevailed”. Much was at stake: irrigation competed with railways, while foreign loans to finance irrigation might jeopardize Siam’s independence (the French threat to the east was still alive in 1903). The huge project itself had risks. Was Siam capable of managing such a large project? It was well known that some early Dutch irrigation projects in Java had failed, and others had been studied for several years before being implemented. The Special Committee was charged with this decision, but above them always loomed the dominant figure of King Chulalongkorn himself.

The archival record shows that he read many of the various reports, letters, and memos, and often wrote candid comments on them. Brummelhuis cites several instances in which he cut through the tangle to clarify issues.

By the end of 1903 the decision was taken – NOT to proceed with the Great Scheme. Though bitterly disappointed, van der Heide responded by drawing up a succession of smaller schemes, pieces designed to be compatible with the Great Scheme, if it were ever to be revived. He also undertook some smaller projects, digging canals and installing locks, and thereby winning the confidence of rice farmers in several areas. They saw that what he did worked. He also succeeded in establishing a Royal Irrigation Department, of which he was the first director. Brummelhuis shows that van der Heide continued to have difficult, prickly relationships with the Siamese bureaucracy, especially the Ministry of Finance and the Treasury.

Finally, when he returned after having taken a year’s leave, van der Heide realized that prospects for irrigation in Siam were bleak. None of his smaller schemes had ever been approved, and his budget was repeatedly cut. He resigned and left Bangkok in 1909, seven years after he arrived. He had spent the prime of his life in this failed effort. Brummelhuis says the failure haunted him to the end of his life. He blamed the British for it.

Brummelhuis equivocates about whether Siam made a mistake in not going ahead with the Great Scheme in

1903. But he suggests that the outcome might have been different with a different cast of characters. If, for example, van der Heide had been reporting to Prince Damrong, instead of the weak, timid Thewet, the outcome might have been different.

As it happened, an irrigation project similar to the Great Scheme was built in the 1950s with foreign loans and World Bank assistance. It was a great success.

As noted, this is not a biography of Homan van der Heide, but one could wish for a little more information about the man. We are not even told whether his family came to Bangkok. On the very last page there is a single mention of a wife, riding with him in a farm cart after World War II. Van der Heide had National Socialist sympathies in the 1930s and was arrested after the war. He died in an internment camp in 1945 at the age of 80.

Altogether, this is an impressive and valuable contribution to the economic and social history of Thailand.

There is an excellent index and many useful photographs and maps

James C. Ingram

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Luigi Bressan and Michael Smithies, *Thai-Vatican Relations in the Twentieth Century*. Bangkok, Apostolic Nunciature, 2006, 178 pp., ill.

This volume arrives as the third of a trilogy involving the same authors, whose first two volumes were *Siam and the Vatican in the Seventeenth Century* (2001), and, by Luigi Bressan alone, *King Chulalongkorn and Pope Leo XIII* (1998). The present concluding volume of the trilogy was published in 2006, in the words of Michael Cardinal Michai Kitbunchu, Archbishop of Bangkok, “to celebrate the auspicious occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of His Majesty’s Coronation”, that of Phra Bat Somdej Phra Paramindara Maha Bhumibol Adulyadej.

After the preface of Cardinal Michai Kitbunchu and acknowledgements, there follows an introduction covering the advent of Christianity in Thailand and early contacts with the Vatican. Then Chapter 1, ‘The First Decade’, covers the death of Pope Leo XIII in 1903, who in 1897 had received in audience King Chulalongkorn; the election of Pope Pius X in the same year; King Chulalongkorn’s letter of congratulations on his election; the death of King Chulalongkorn in 1910, and the accession of King Vajiravudh, who had earlier been part of King Chulalongkorn’s entourage visiting Pope Leo XIII in 1897; King Vajiravudh’s letter informing the Pope of the death of his father, and his own accession to the throne; and a letter from Pope Pius X expressing

his sincere condolences on the death of King Chulalongkorn and best wishes to the new king.

Chapter 2, 'The Second Decade', includes letters from the Vatican to King Vajiravudh informing His Majesty of the death of Pius X in 1914 and election of Pope Benedict XV; from the Pope announcing his election; and from the King congratulating the Pope. Chapter 3, 'The 1920s', takes up documents relating to the death of Pope Benedict XV in 1922; the election of Pope Pius XI; letters to and from the Pope and King Vajiravudh; an unofficial visit to the Vatican of HRH Prince Mahidol; the death of King Vajiravudh in 1925; and the accession of King Prajadhipok.

'The 1930s', chapter 4, records the visits to the Vatican of HRH Prince Damrong Rajanubhab in 1930 and then of their Majesties King Prajadhipok and Queen Rambai in 1934, including their Majesties' presence at the canonization of St. John Bosco; the abdication of King Prajadhipok from England in 1935; the accession to the throne of King Ananda Mahidol.

Chapter 5, 'The 1940s and 1950s', tells of the death of Pope Pius XI and letter from Pope Pius XII to King Ananda Mahidol; King Ananda Mahidol's visit to Assumption Cathedral accompanied by Bishop Perot in 1946, a month before His Majesty's death; the accession of King Ananda Mahidol's brother, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, to the throne in the same year; Prime Minister Field Marshal Phibul's private audience with Pope Pius XII in 1955; the Pope's

creation of the Apostolic Delegation in Thailand, 1957; the death of Pope Pius XII and election of Pope John XXIII in 1958.

Next, chapter 6, 'The 1960s', recounts in great detail the third Royal Visit to the Vatican from Thailand, this time that of Their Majesties King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit in 1960; the death of Pope John XXIII and election of Paul VI in 1963. Chapter 7, 'The 1970s', recalls the establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and the Holy See and the opening of the Apostolic Nunciature in Bangkok, 1969; private audiences with the Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, of the Buddhist "Delegation of Messengers of Peace", including Phra Thep Sophon and Phra Dhamkosacharn, senior Thai Buddhist monks, 1971; of Dr. Thanat Khoman in also 1971; of a special delegation of Thai Buddhist monks in 1972; and documents between the King and the Vatican on the occasion of the death of Pope Paul VI, the election of Pope John Paul I, the death of John Paul I, and the election of Pope John Paul II – all in 1978.

Chapter 8, 'The 1980s', features the news of the elevation of Archbishop Michael Michai Kitbunchu to the rank of Cardinal in 1983, and the state visit of Pope John Paul II to Thailand in 1984. Pope John Paul II was met at the airport in Bangkok by the Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn on behalf of His Majesty, together with government representatives, and from the airport went immediately to visit King Bhumibol

Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit at the Grand Palace, and from there to visit the Supreme Patriarch of the Buddhist *Sangha* in Thailand, before beginning to meet, in an unbelievably crushing schedule, officials at Government House, and his Catholic flock. After that there were private audiences with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican with HRH Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn in 1985 and with HRH Crown Princess Sirindhorn in 1988.

Lastly, chapter 9, 'Into the 21st Century', closes with moving messages between His Majesty King Bhumibol and the Vatican on the occasion of the death of Pope John Paul II and the election of Pope Benedict XVI in 2005.

What stands out in this third volume of the trilogy is the nature of the relationship between Their Majesties, the monarchs of Thailand, and their governments, with the Popes and the Vatican over 400 years and climaxing in the twentieth century. It could be held, given the friendly relations over such a long period, that the purpose to begin with was basically political, in the sense that the royal governments have consistently respected the freedom of all religions within the Kingdom of Thailand, and in its turn the Vatican has been deeply appreciative of this. Nevertheless the characteristics of the relationship go far beyond that. For, reviewing the relevant documents presented in this volume, one can only be moved by the sincerity, human concern, integrity and, one cannot help but notice, genuine friendship displayed to each

other by both the Kings of Thailand and their court and the Popes with their entourages, beginning in particular with the visit of King Chulalongkorn in 1897, despite the tense relationship at that time between the Italian Government and the Vatican.

The continual concern and warmth of expression is evident, both in the documents to and fro with repeated blessings from the Popes on the King, his reign, his family and all the people of Thailand, and likewise from Their Majesties for the Pope and the peoples of the Catholic Church; such affection was even more apparent during the royal visits and papal audiences, not to mention Pope John Paul II's visit to Thailand. There was no hidden agenda: it was a transparent relationship, and the Popes and the Kings were truly friends. If in doubt, read the documents.

As the Catholics of Thailand are noted for their love and loyalty to Our Holy Father, the Pope, so is their gratitude, love and loyalty to His Majesty the King equally profound. What an amazing phenomenon in today's world! No wonder Catholics take a special pride in being Thai.

In conclusion, it must be mentioned that this book is extremely valuable for its presentation of clear photocopies of the numerous relevant documents and their translations. This was accomplished through painstaking and thorough research of the various archives concerned both in Thailand and at the Vatican. In addition, the text is accompanied throughout by clear, historic

photographs of many of the events it portrays, helping the reader to relive in imagination those happy, blessed events.

The book concludes with five pages of annexes containing lists detailing a chronology of Thai-Vatican relations in the twentieth century; the reigns of Thai monarchs and Supreme Pontiffs in the twentieth century; Thai envoys to the Holy See and the presentation of letters of credence; and Vatican envoys to Thailand. And the very last page after the annexes contains enlightening details of the lives of its two authors, Luigi Bressan and Michael Smithies.

Worth reading carefully. Worth preserving!

Sigmund J. Laschenski, S.J.

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Thak Chaloeontiarana, *Thailand: The politics of despotic paternalism*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2007, xxiii + 284 pp., pb, Bt 695.

Much value has been added to this new edition of an important book. In terms of quantity, I estimate an additional 30 per cent, if you include a new Foreword (13 pp.) and Postscript (30 pp.), an index and at least fifty photographs that were not in the first edition of 1979. The publisher Silkworm Books has to be congratulated once again. The new edition has better paper, binding, fonts and editing, though there are still a few avoidable errors.

Thak Chaloeontiarana is a senior Thai political scientist who has long been at Cornell University. He started his PhD research on the Thai military just a month or two before the November 1971 coup d'état which, in his new Foreword, he describes as 'a coup against the rising demands of civil society' and 'an attempt to rejuvenate and to maintain the political system that Sarit devised'. He turned his attention to Sarit himself – a 'paternalistic despot' (*phokhun uppatham baeb padetkan*). He asks the question whether in Thailand 'the legitimacy of a civil leader[ship] can ever be based solely on legal-rational institutions'.

The question is once again of contemporary relevance. Many people have a feeling that Thailand's political development has been, or is in danger of being, set back, maybe to the 1960s, or even to before 1932. Whether you have

read the first edition, as I did, or not, this book is of great interest and relevance to today's political debates. The fact that a Thai language edition was published in 2005 is also a great help.

The structure of the book is not quite what you might expect, and I guess this owes something to its origins as a PhD thesis. It is not a biography of Sarit, nor is it a detailed account of all the activities and process and stages of his period of rule (1957–1963). Nor is there any substantial treatment of the Thanom-Phrapas government (1963–1973), which tried to continue the Sarit system of government.

One-third of the book covers the period covering approximately 1943–1957, and this is very good. In the four main chapters (3–6) the emphasis is primarily on Sarit's style of leadership, his ideology of Thai-style political leadership and the way he developed a coherent system with ever-increasing power in his own hands. The ways in which he controlled the bureaucracy, the military, the monarchy and the development process are key elements in the Sarit story.

Sarit Thanarat, a north-easterner, graduated from the military academy in 1928. Unlike the leaders of the 1930s, who were strongly influenced by the West, Sarit and his henchmen were 'indigenous products'. He was already a colonel in the offensive in the Shan States in 1942. By 1957, as a Lieutenant-General in command of the 1st Division of the army, he was an (apparently reluctant) member of Phibun's coup

group. He was to play a leading role in forcefully suppressing the 'Palace coup' of 1949 and the 'Manhattan rebellion' of 1951.

Tak emphasises the importance of Sarit's notion of 'revolution' (*patthiwat*), which is how Sarit characterised his 20 October 1958 coup. Thak agrees that it was revolutionary in the sense given to it in a Revolutionary Council statement of 1965 (Thanom's period):

The revolution of October 20 1958 abolished democratic ideas borrowed from the West and suggested that it would build a democratic system that would be appropriate to the specific characteristics and realities of the Thai. It will build a democracy, a Thai way of democracy.

The statement continues:

The Thai people in general do not wish to have a part in national politics. They wish only for a leader who has *khuntam* (moral responsibility) and ability. A majority of Thai people feel that the power to rule belongs to the monarch ... and the *chao nai*. ... The social division between the ruler and the ruled is absolute ... and the two classes could never be equal in any way.

Sarit tended to equate statism (*rathaniyom*), which he promoted, with *phraratchaniyom* (royalism), which he began to revive in a new form. According to Thak, Sarit believed that 'social mobilization should be minimised, for it caused the disintegration of traditional institutions and values.' Instead, the overriding principle was *samakhitham* (the moral principle of solidarity). This is a slogan issued from many quarters that has strong resonances today.

This was far from the populism of say, Peron in Argentina, or the mass mobilization in fascist Italy or national-socialist Germany. When I first arrived in Thailand in June 1962, I had just spent a few months in Franco's Spain, and from the first I felt strong echoes of that regime.

Let me rehearse a few 'facts' from Sarit's six-year regime. For someone opposed to Western political forms, Sarit was remarkably open to the West, and especially the USA. Urged by the World Bank, and listening to his civilian technocratic advisers, Sarit heralded the first National Economic Development Plan in 1961. By 1960, 5,000 US troops were stationed in Thailand; infrastructural work began on roads, airfields, harbours and so on. By 1964 the US had a massive military presence that was to grow. The extensive road-building programme was chiefly to improve access for military and officials in 'insecure areas'. In these areas army Mobile Development Units spearheaded crude community development schemes, causing 'increasing bitterness and resentment among villagers'. Thailand had thrown itself enthusiastically into the Cold War from the early 1950s. Sarit strengthened the Anti-Communist Activities Act of 1952 in 1958.

Internationally, Sarit made good use of highly talented civilian experts, such as Thanat Khoman, Phote Sarasin, Puey Ungphakorn and others. Sarit 'actively and consciously directed the activity of the monarchy.' This led to overseas state visits to twenty countries by the

King and Queen between June 1960 and Sarit's death in November 1963. According to Thak, this helped legitimise Sarit's leadership and 'minimise foreign criticism of the regime for being dictatorial'.

Sarit arrested a great many politicians, journalists, writers and others who were 'suspected of communist activities'. Many spent long periods in prison, some disappeared. He had four such suspects publicly executed. Sarit also authorised the public execution of five arsonists, one heroin producer, and one millenarian religious leader. I have no way of knowing whether this was all. Nor do I know of the extent of extra-judicial killings in the Sarit period, of the sort that became widespread after his death. It is noteworthy, however, that these executions, without due process and in any case barely legal under a clause in the constitution, were all public and Sarit emphasised his personal responsibility for them. This is in marked contrast to the later style of denials, disclaimers, distancing etc. They were not massacres.

As a young British Council officer in Thailand from 1962–64, I felt the same sort of stifling intellectual atmosphere I had experienced in Madrid. There were some rare exceptions that I knew of, a few of which I had the pleasure to be slightly involved with. One was the setting up of the Social Science Association Press by Sulak Srivararak, and later the journal *Sangkhomsat Parithat*. This was an exceptional beacon of civil liberty and freedom of expression that

may have had consequences not anticipated by its sponsors. Cit Phumisak and Tongbai Thongpao and many others were in prison. Tak reminds us that 'a whole generation of intellectuals who expressed a deep social consciousness, was eliminated.' The Buddhist Sangha was 'reformed' to 'facilitate political control and penetration.'

Sarit apparently had 'an obsession with cleanliness, purity and discipline'. I suspect that, on the back of some of Phibun's cultural regulations, Sarit may have influenced much of what still passes for standard Thai public etiquette in schools and official settings.

He declared opium use illegal from 1 January 1959. He banned pedicabs from Bangkok in 1959. He cleared the streets of beggars, hooligans, and stray dogs, and punished people for littering. He stressed the importance of external beautification of villages as a sign of 'development'.

He banned rock-and-roll from official parties and dancing 'the twist' in public places. (It was certainly the rave in private places!) A few initiatives were blatantly populist and truly popular, such as reducing the price of iced black coffee (*oliang*), a common and especially working class beverage (though traders cheated). This was in part a sign of bias against Thai-Chinese people.

Thak's research yields some fine details. Some of my favourite passages concern the Lao crisis of 1957–62; the influence of Luang Wichit on Sarit's ideological thinking, 'Socialising of the bureaucracy', drawing on data from par-

ticipation in the National Defense College 1956–79; 'Harnessing the military', drawing on contributions to the army journal *Yuttakhot* 1947–1969; and 'The role of the monarchy', drawing on daily records of royal activities 1963–71.

This latter source lists the amount and purpose of charitable donations received by the monarchy, which contributed to the expansion and justification of an independent base for the monarchy to intervene in social and political agendas, and for its increasing independence from government control and direction.

Thak's approach is suited to his subject. He is quite rightly concerned, from the outset, to investigate 'the importance of historical and cultural constraints on the nature of [Thai politics]', which had hitherto been given insufficient attention by the mainly American scholars whom he quotes frequently (Riggs, Jacobs, Wilson, Yano et al.). He discusses most perceptively Sarit's 'popularity' despite his 'distasteful and tight-fisted [iron fisted, heavy handed?] rule'. His study could be seen as more of a hermeneutics than a critique. Almost completely absent in the footnotes (there is no bibliography) are references to Thai or Western critical or theoretical sources. The prevailing approach is empirical and culturalist (he agrees that Sarit's style was 'quite Thai in character'). He also agrees with what he identifies as a consensus among commentators at the time, that Sarit's regime was 'successful', though this begs many questions. He asserts that Thai democracy 'is still young and finding its way' (it is, though,

already older than the entire Soviet communist regime). He asserts that 'Thai democracy has made great progress since 1932.' The September 2006 coup was a setback.

So we might conclude, and some would applaud while others reserve judgement, that this eminent scholar is cautious and even rather conservative in his judgements, and on the whole optimistic about the future direction of Thai political culture and institutions. I would count myself among those who might welcome a more critical, certainly sceptical, and theoretically informed analysis. Even within the remit of the first edition, greater attention might have been given to the role of the USA, and more extensive treatment given to the Thanom-Phrapas years. But this is probably asking for a different book.

I much enjoyed this book. It is readable and well written. I think Thak's approach to Sarit's style of political leadership is pertinent for a contemporary understanding not only of the Sarit years, but of the Sarit legacy that reaches beyond 1973 into the present; I am sure this book will and should remain a classic.

Andrew Turton

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Pasuk Pongpaichit and Chris Baker, eds, *Thai Capital after the 1997 Crisis*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2008, xv +309 pp., paperback.

The aim of this book is to analyze how Thai domestic capital has fared since the watershed crisis of 1997. The aim is a worthy one. In the boom decade before 1997 domestic capital played a notable part in economic growth. High rates of domestic savings, cheap labour, government encouragement and liberal bank lending policies all fuelled growth rates which were among the highest in the world. Foreign capital flowed in too, often in joint ventures with Thai partners, and often in conjunction with advanced technology and skilled foreign management. Given the depth of the 1997 crisis, the shock to established patterns of business behaviour, the subsequent rise (and fall) of Thaksin and his TRT party, and the changed domestic and international economic environment, it is, indeed, appropriate that a study should be made of the way the Thai economy has been able to adapt. The question is, though, does the present book succeed in its aim?

*Thai Capital...* is the product of a research project funded by the Thailand Research Fund. Fourteen researchers, most of them from Thai academia, contributed to an original study published in Thai in two volumes in 2006. Now we have an English version, pruned and updated, with eight substantive papers (instead of the original thirteen), twelve contributors (ten from the earlier pub-

lication together with the two editors who each have a jointly-written piece here), and an introduction and conclusion contributed by the editors.

Of course, one must approach any publication of collected academic papers on tip-toe. Inherent problems with such compilations are manifest: uneven quality, lack of uniformity in approach and length, gaps in coverage and overlap among the papers.

Let it be said at the outset that this book is, by and large, unified in theme, eminently readable, and, without exception among the papers, informative and original. While allowing the contributors latitude to develop their own approaches and arguments, the editors have organized the material intelligently to give direction and coherence to the volume. Thus we have a lengthy initial chapter which takes an overall look at the way the crisis affected the structure of Thai big business. This is followed by three papers on 'Sectors' (automobiles, retailing and mobile phones), two 'Survivors' (liquor and the Crown Property Bureau), two 'Localities' (Rayong and Chiang Mai), and finally two under the rubric 'Prospects' (Thai overseas investment and 'rents and rent-seeking').

Looked at differently, nearly all the papers here, with the exception of the opening chapter, are straightforward narrative accounts of particular Thai companies and entrepreneurs, drawing for their material largely on the financial press and, often, on interviews. All these chapters, without exception, allude to the significance of political links for

the survival and development of business. The level of economic analysis is limited. Thus we are told unhelpfully that one Chiang Mai entrepreneur in the 1960s 'left school and became a market labourer... ferrying goods by tricycle. He progressed from tricycle to a truck, and gradually expanded until he was the largest transport contractor in the city...' (p.222). Similarly Charoen 'rose to dominate the liquor business in part because of his extraordinary talent for managing and manipulating the monopoly, and in part because many of his potential rivals abandoned the business as too old-fashioned.' (p.151). The Crown Property Bureau 'not only survived the crisis but also emerged far stronger' due to 'excellent management and strategic restructuring' (p.184). In Rayong, among the three prominent business families, 'the Pitudecha clan from Ban Khai emerged strongest from the crisis. Perhaps because it had been the most godfather-like of the families, it had the resources to shift away from the old mode of primitive accumulation and into a new economy of manufacture, exporting, and urban services'. (p. 213).

Several points can be made about these essentially narrative accounts. First, no number of particulars can produce a generalization. In other words, the multiplying of case studies still leaves untouched what should be the core theme of the subject – the size, structure and overall direction of Thai domestic capital after 1997 and the forces which determined them. Second, that bane of conference collections,

incomplete coverage, becomes all too evident. There is nothing on the role of the banking sector – surely critical; and nothing on any government-supported mega-project. And is there any general conclusion to be gleaned from studies of Rayong and Chiang Mai, with nothing on Bangkok, the South, or the Northeast?

Third, while undoubtedly interesting and even fascinating, accounts that are based on interviews and the financial press can go no further than such sources allow. The arguments presented here are thus often rather simplistic. Of course, one cannot expect detailed archival research and studies of company accounts for a period so recent and for businesses so secretive. But at least the level of analysis could be more profound. We are given an account of the rise of post-crisis multinational retailing, without even a mention of the collapse of the baht (which gave huge and long-lasting advantages for foreign acquisition), nor of the collapse of domestic bank lending. There are attempts here and there to discuss the search for ‘economic rent’ as a motive force for the direction of capital investment, though this often amounts to no more than describing market imperfections bought by political favours.

Finally, the chosen format for these studies makes it impossible to stand back from the particular and to present an overall picture (though the editors do attempt something of the sort in their introductory and concluding chapters). A case in point is the brief and perceptive Foreword by Ammar Siamwalla

– oddly, his name does not appear on the contents page. Siamwalla laments the lack of dynamism and risk-taking by Thai capital throughout the decade following the crisis, yet one can read this book from cover to cover without so much as a hint of these shortcomings or their causes.

Separate mention, though, must be made of the opening chapter. This substantial piece, ‘Companies in Crisis’, is based partly on some detailed and invaluable data provided by the eminent Japanese scholar Akira Suehiro. The core of this paper is contained in tables that chart the changes in the relative standing of the leading business groups between 1979 and 2000, and which show the concentration of shareholding and the extent of family control over the period 1996–2006. Here is the reality of the crisis, the changing fortunes of the dominant business groups, their survival or disappearance, and their vulnerability to foreign acquisition. The data bring out clearly the continued, even growing, concentration of assets in the country, and even in banking “the old controlling family still hung onto control in four of the top five” (p. 55).

Like the crisis itself, this book has both positive and negative features. Positive, certainly, is the information contained in the case-studies presented here. The stories of the Rayong and Chiang Mai family-controlled businesses, of the rise of Thaksin’s mobile phone empire, of the survival of the Crown Property Bureau, of the clashes between the competing interests in the

lucrative liquor business, and others, are instructive and fascinating. They are also depressing. Everywhere politics and political affiliations intrude. Lurking just below the surface, or sometimes visible upon it, are corruption and political favours, and even violence and criminality. Indeed the book is more about the darker side of politics and business than about economics. Far from opening and liberating markets, the crisis enhanced the active participation of business in politics, reaching its apogee in the Thaksin era. Positive also, as already mentioned, is the opening chapter, which will certainly be mined for its wealth of data. Negative is the book's lack of any overall perspective on the performance of Thai domestic capital, and the lack of any economic analysis in most of the chapters.

All in all, though, this is a book to read and to reflect upon, and to make us wonder yet again at the extraordinary power of Sino-Thai business groups to survive and adapt to changing circumstances.

Malcolm Falkus

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Rory Mackenzie, *New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: Towards an Understanding of Wat Phra Dhammakaya and Santi Asoke*. London and New York, Routledge, 2007, 253 pp., notes, index and bibliography.

The topic of this book, comparing two new but quite different Buddhist movements, is highly relevant to understanding what has been happening amongst primarily middle-class, urban-based Thai Buddhists over the past three decades. Rory Mackenzie's key findings, that both the Santi Asoke and Wat Phra Dhammakaya movements reflect "a disenchantment with traditional expressions of mainstream Thai Buddhism and a desire for Buddhist solutions for contemporary living" (p. xi), mirror the views of many more thoughtful Thai Buddhists and also catch the tenor of much public discourse about Buddhism in Thailand, in both the Thai- and English-language press, over the past twenty years or more. However, given the continuing importance of Buddhism to notions of Thai identity, and the prominence of debates about the appropriate and proper forms of Buddhist religious practice in Thailand today, I was disappointed that this book did not offer more.

The original fieldwork for this book seems to have been quite limited, and the report of field research at Wat Phra Dhammakaya and Santi Asoke reads more like a day-by-day diary – "I did this, then I did that" – than a systematic analysis of new empirical information.

The author draws on a diverse range of theoretical and analytical frameworks. For example, in considering the Wat Phra Dhammakaya movement, Mackenzie draws on work by Glock and Stark, Bryan Wilson, Roy Wallis, and Lance Cousins – all in half a dozen pages. However, these frameworks are merely listed in sequence one after the other, without any consideration of the extent to which they are consistent, or perhaps contradictory. This creates a scatter-gun effect and a lack of intellectual focus. The author seems more concerned to quote every possible authority rather than to sift the information at hand and come to a considered conclusion about which particular form of analysis provides the most fitting and intellectually insightful approach.

The transcription of Thai is idiosyncratic, erratic, and unrelated to any of the academically accepted systems for romanising Thai. On many occasions it took me some time to decipher what Thai term the author intended, distracting me from the arguments the author tries to make. Amongst the many examples are *te am* (for *thiam*, “false, artificial”), *laa te* (for *latthi*, “belief, cult”), *pom bi ...* (for *phom pai ...*, “I went to ...”), *monetee* (for *mulanithi*, “foundation”), *lukanuwat* (for *lokanuwat*, “globalization”), *patepattam* (for *patibat tham*, “to engage in Buddhist practice”), and *mi gin neua* (for *mai kin neua*, “not eating meat”). Considerably more can be added to this list.

The editing is the sloppiest I have come across in many a year. For exam-

ple, I was initially nonplussed by reference to a book on the 1992 Thai political crisis by an author I had never heard of, listed both in the text and bibliography as “K. Thefravit”. I assumed this was a European or North American commentator. However, after some reflection I realized that the citation includes a spelling error (repeated even in the bibliography) and Mackenzie is in fact referring to a book by the Thai academic Khien Theeravit! In both the text and the bibliography, the author follows the Western system and lists Thai authors by surname, rather than adopting the accepted academic standard of listing Thai authors by first name.

For me the most interesting part of the book is a small anecdote on pages 36 and 37 about an Englishman who apparently went by two names, William Purfurst and Richard Randall. This Englishman was ordained as a Buddhist monk at Wat Paknam in 1954 by Luang Phor Sot, the abbot who established the *dhammakaya* meditation system that in later decades became the foundation of the Wat Phra Dhammakaya movement. Purfurst (aka Randall), who took the Pali name Kapilavaddho, later had a falling-out with Luang Phot Sot and returned to England in 1956, where, according to Mackenzie, he became an important force in the development of Theravada Buddhism in Britain.

Those interested in contemporary Thai Buddhism will find this book most useful as a summary of what has been written on the topic in English over the past couple of decades, rather than as

a source of new insights. The author quotes the *Bangkok Post* so often that this newspaper seems to be his primary source of information. Not even *The Nation* gets much of a look-in, let alone the Thai-language press, which the author ignores completely. The book is primarily an extended, poorly edited literature review that compiles secondary sources in a mostly uncritical format. It would seem that very little if any work has been done in transforming this text from its original format, a PhD dissertation submitted to the International Christian College in Glasgow, into a monograph. The publisher, Routledge, certainly needs to pull its socks up and make sure that raw, error-strewn texts such as this are subjected to at least a modicum of professionally competent editing.

Peter Jackson

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Duncan McCargo, ed., *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*. Singapore, National University of Singapore Press, 2007, 225 pp.

One of the challenges in publishing academic studies on violent contemporary conflicts is how well what one has written stands the test of time, since by its very dynamic nature a situation of violent conflict can rapidly change. Moreover, violent conflict presents some extreme methodological problems for academic inquiry: accessing the conflict zone for sufficient periods required to gather usable data; being able to sift through the misinformation circulating in the propaganda war; conditions of martial law; and even the ability to obtain information from those involved in the conflict, who, out of an understandable desire to protect themselves, may not be willing to offer information, or else the information they offer may out of necessity be highly partisan or deliberately designed to misinform.

The case of the conflict in southern Thailand, currently Southeast Asia's most violent, is a particularly acute example of this challenge. To the problems stated above can be added the difficulties that researchers face coming to terms with the cultural and linguistic differences of the local population, and even the existence of Thailand's draconian *lèse majesté* law, which prevents any critical discussion of matters relating to the monarchy, which undeniably has taken a close interest in the situation in the south. Perhaps it is for all of these

reasons that, as has often been pointed out, the violence in southern Thailand is one of the “murkiest”, most difficult to understand conflicts in the region, if not the world, today.

*Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence* thus comes as a welcome attempt to address these challenges. The book is an updated version of a collection of essays that were first published in a special issue of the journal *Critical Asian Studies* in March 2006, based on papers presented at a workshop held in Pattani in February 2005. The stated aim of the volume is to help provide some answers to the question, “what lies behind the violence in the Thai South” (p. 3). Written at a time when the international “war on terror” was still being vigorously pursued and explanatory frameworks based on studies of international terrorism had considerable influence on the way the violence in the south was represented in the media and in much scholarship, the essays in this book aim to “challenge the reader to question conventional categories and lazy assumptions” such as “the Thai state”, “militant groups”, “Muslim communities” and “security agencies” (pp. 8–9). The book’s principal message is that the answer to the question of the reasons for the violence lies in understanding Thailand’s – and the southern region’s – political and social context. Having stated an overly modest claim of making a “small start” in the direction of finding answers to the question above, the book has clearly succeeded.

*Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence* is a tightly edited collection

of seven essays written by some of the most prominent Thai and international scholars working on the conflict in southern Thailand. One of the book’s strengths is that the broad range of issues covered by the essays, including the politics of monuments in the south (Chaiwat Satha-Anand); the relationship between the violence in southern Thailand and the political struggle between Thaksin and “network monarchy” (Duncan McCargo); the Thaksin government’s “hawkish” response to the violence (Ukrist Pathamanand); socio-economic factors behind the violence (Srisompob Jitipiromsri with Panyasak Sobhonvasu); the role of “jihadism” and Islamist ideology (Wattana Sugunnasil); local perceptions of the conflict (May Tan-Mullins); and the representation of the conflict in the terrorism studies literature (Michael K. Connors). The result is a well-rounded perspective on the reasons for the conflict. One can always make criticisms, not always fairly, of what or who else might have been included in an edited volume; in this case one feels that a “Patani Malay” voice may have given the collection an additional important point of view.

The book will be particularly noted for its inclusion of the second half of McCargo’s famous and controversial “network monarchy” thesis – the first half, “Network monarchy and legitimacy crises in Thailand”, was published in a 2005 issue of the journal, *The Pacific Review*, and ought to be read in conjunction with the essay in this volume. McCargo’s essays count as

the most novel contribution to the now voluminous scholarly literature on the outbreak of violence in the south since 2004. “Network monarchy” is the term he uses to refer to “the dominant mode of governance used in Thailand since 1980”, in which “the monarchy operates through proxies led by former prime minister and Privy Council President Prem Tinsulanond”. According to McCargo, Thaksin aimed to displace network monarchy governance with a more centralized form of political control headed by the Prime Minister himself. Significantly, the political management of the south since the early 1980s was centred on a “governance network” headed by Prem, himself a southerner and a key figure in the suppression of the communist insurgency in the 1970s and 1980s. The violence in the south, a highly sensitive and complex part of the country, given its ethnic and religious mix, lucrative trade in smuggled goods, and entrenched interests of the military, can thus be viewed as the main battlefield in Thaksin’s attempt to “wrest control” of Thailand from “network monarchy” (pp. 39–67).

Overshadowing most of the essays in this volume is the figure of Thaksin, and his government’s widely criticized handling of the conflict. Following the overthrow of Thaksin by a royalist coup on 19 September 2006 it was expected by numerous professional observers, including many academics, that the situation in the south would improve, given that supposedly the main problem, i.e. Thaksin, was now gone. The

royalist regime installed after the coup made much of this expectation, with the newly appointed Prime Minister and former Privy Counselor Gen. Surayudh Chulanond making a highly publicized apology to the local Muslim community for the previous government’s handling of the conflict. In fact, the conflict intensified following the coup, with the number of violent incidents, deaths and injuries significantly jumping. So the natural question is to ask why. It is tempting also to ask whether the criticism of Thaksin’s handling of a severe national security issue in the south, especially by influential figures allied with or part of McCargo’s “network monarchy”, was part of a coordinated movement to discredit Thaksin with the eventual aim of overthrowing his government.

This collection of essays will remain essential reading for scholars and others who seek to examine how the conflict broke out. Has it stood the test of time? The limitation of understanding the conflict as merely a local version of an international terrorist struggle is now widely accepted. Subsequent studies of local factors behind the conflict add to, but do not in general contradict, the main theme of the essays in this volume. Yet if we accept McCargo’s argument of another struggle, between “network monarchy” and forces loyal to Thaksin, which continues through the time of writing this review (late 2007), the volume poses perhaps the biggest question which has yet to be answered: to what extent does this conflict con-

tinue to cloud our understanding of Thailand's southern violence?

An eagerly awaited monograph on the situation in the south is currently being prepared by the editor of the volume under review, Duncan McCargo, based on his own fieldwork of a year in the region. That book may answer this and other unanswered questions thrown up by this volume.

Patrick Jory

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Maurizio Peleggi, *Thailand: The Worldly Kingdom*. Singapore, Talisman Publishing, 2007, 256 pp.

*Thailand: the Worldly Kingdom* should be welcomed by students and general English-speaking readers with strong scholarly or even mundane interest in the country's modern history. It is a fresh and up-to-date reinterpretation of this history. Maurizio Peleggi pieces together chains of events and stories of Thailand's nation-building project in the past two centuries. He unveils the underlying fact that the complex historical processes that make Thailand 'a worldly kingdom' are essentially global. The emergence of Thailand is indeed closely tied with international connection, exposure, influence, and negotiation. A history of Thailand, as well as other modern nation-states, would be incomplete if written with a sole focus on local processes and a series of famous heroic contributions of 'great men'. Peleggi argues that Thailand as a modern nation-state has come into existence through reaction with the world. Civilization and globalization, the two most encompassing forces that have powerfully reshaped the world, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, not only define Thailand's state formation and its nationhood, but also play a very important role in determining the Thai identity, or Thainess. For him, such identity is 'a syncretic product', resulting from the 'translation, assimilation, and adaptation of exogenous ideas, practices and

materials to the indigenous socio-cultural terrain.’ (p.21)

Peleggi’s approach to understanding Thailand’s modern history, by his own confession here, is ‘unorthodox’ (p.8). It is a trendy global history approach, which resituates Thailand in the wider process of the emergence of the modern world. In employing this approach, Peleggi intends to move away from at least three existing historiographical conventions, namely, (1) recounting historical actors and events in chronological or linear framework; (2) describing chains of historical events from a ‘from-above’ perspective or through agencies of great men, e.g., kings, noblemen, and the elite; and (3) narrating historical changes from the popular or ‘from-below’ perspective of commoners. Putting this book into the particular context of Thai and Southeast Asian historiographies, he apparently wishes to demystify the ‘exceptionality of Thai nation building’ (p.8) by interjecting an alternative view of claims, such as Thailand never having been a colonized country, or Thailand’s emergence of the modern nation state owing a great deal to modernizing initiatives launched by wise and powerful modernizers. These views he considers rather overrated, if not patriotically biased. There is no such exceptional or uniquely Thai path that gave birth to the Thai modern nationhood, because Thailand has been part of a common global process and shared cultural experience of modernity with her Southeast Asian neighbours and most

countries around the globe in the past two hundred years.

While the scholarly success and impacts of Peleggi’s attempt to write a Thai edition of global history remain to be seen, his move is admirably creative and experimental. The fundamental part of Peleggi’s approach is an analytical insight of both archaic and modern global processes which have created ‘a diffuse geo-cultural space’ (p.11). The historical process and imagination are fuelled by diffusion, interaction, adaptation, and localization of layers of geo-cultural spaces, such as Indic, Sinic, European, American, Theravada Buddhist, and indigenous geo-cultural terrains. Peleggi explores actions and reactions, continuities and discontinuities within and/or between these geo-cultural spaces as his major themes of modern Thai history. Instead of arranging the domain of modern Thai history into periods, reigns, or centres of political power, he opts for the thematic treatment. Included are the themes of landscapes, boundaries, institutions, ideologies, modernities, mnemonic sites, and others. These themes make up the book’s seven chapters, highlighting ‘the relationship of the forces constitutive of [sic] the Thai nation-state to the constellation of phenomena—from imperialism to nationalism, from urbanization to the diffusion of mass media, from the institutionalization of religion to the politicization of youth’ (p.8). These themes are carefully chosen and extracted from the vast quantity of historical sources.

Peleggi’s thematic treatment of mod-

ern Thai history is an answer to existing volumes, particularly Keyes (1987), Wyatt (1982), Pasuk Pongphaichit and Chris Baker (2000), and Scot Barmé (2006). Like these works, Peleggi's book is written for general readership. His smooth prose is readily accessible. He weaves together selective events and presents them in an easy-to-grasp manner. However, Peleggi's book is different from the rest with its global approach and insistent arguments pertinent to the global process. It stands sharply apart from Keyes' insistence on Buddhist fundamental contributions to, and Wyatt's emphasis on agency of kings and noblemen in, the making of the modern Thai nation state. It is different from Pasuk and Baker's political-economic focus. It also refuses exclusively to explore the roles of commoners or popular media in the historical process, methodological and theoretical stances adopted by Barmé.

There are some limitations and weaknesses in *Thailand: the Worldly Kingdom*. First, Peleggi's emphasis on civilization and globalization leads to an unavoidable and too intensive analysis of external influences. The global version of Thai history which Peleggi presents is not global enough. There are few discussions on Siamese civilization and globalization from European or American perspectives. Second, a global history implies concentrations on global contacts, which are most likely represented by Bangkok and its political leaders, the cosmopolitan elite and wealthy tycoons. People liv-

ing in the geo-cultural spaces beyond or with less exposure to globalization are methodologically neglected. Third, thematic analysis, while providing some comprehensive picture of the bounded subject, is selective rather than intensive or exhaustive by nature. This approach opens itself to the criticism of what is a historical theme and how a theme can be identified out of some complex, disorderly and disjointed events or against the actors' complicated motivations. A theme usually carries plural and multi-vocal contents, therefore, and could be either overlapping or repetitive.

Finally, the book contains too many minor factual and spelling errors. The decision to transliterate all personal names, especially names of kings, princes and other public figures, is rather anti-conventional and problematic. The transcription of Thai terms does not strictly follow the rules set forward by the Royal Institute. Inconsistencies or misspellings of Romanized Thai words are numerous throughout the book. e.g., *thansamai* or *samai mai*, not *thansaimai* (p.10), *san chao* or *hing phi* for spirit's shrine, not *ban phi* (p.50), names of folk dance genres in the North and Northeast (p.51), *sao praphet song*, not *sao praphet ying* (p.89), or *Chao-praya*, not *Chaophrya* (p.189). Some English translations of Thai terms are rather awkward, e.g., *kan phatthana*, not *phatthana* for development (p. 11, 17), *phum panya thongthin*, not *phum panya* for local knowledge or native wisdom (p.21). There are many factual errors: the government offered a general amnesty

to the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) in 1979, not 1980 (p.18), Puey Ungphakorn was a one-time governor, not director, of the Bank of Thailand (p. 73), a location for a new national capital proposed by Phibun was Phetchabun, not Phetchaburi (p. 124), the stronghold of the Communist Party of Thailand in Isan covered not only Sakhon Nakhon, but many neighboring provinces in the northeastern part of the region – indeed, the first armed fight between a CPT unit and the government force took place in Nakae district, Nakhon Phanom (p. 132) – or making Thao Suranari the wife of Nakhon Ratchasima’s governor rather than deputy governor (p.187). There are also many misspellings and inaccuracies in the bibliography.

Peleggi’s book may look too general for serious students of Thai and South-east Asian history, but his global history approach should spark some interesting debates in the field. Some of his insightful views and brave treatments of the global formation of modern Thai nation-state and identity should offset the factual errors and shortcomings appearing in the book. *Thailand: the Worldly Kingdom* is the most up-to-date reader on the introductory history of modern Thailand.

Pattana Kitiarsa

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Don McCaskill, Prasit Leepreecha, and He Shaoying, eds., *Living in a Globalized World: Ethnic Minorities in the Greater Mekong Subregion*. Chiang Mai, Mekong Press, 2008, pb, xi+374 pp., Bt 895.

*Living in a Globalized World* is an indication of new times in the research and publication about the region, both in its focus on China and mainland Southeast Asia, and in the collaboration among scholars from Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and China. This is a new and positive development, and hopefully indicates a trend of thinking past national boundaries. The nicely designed cover of the book shows (someone dressed as) an ethnic minority woman talking on a cellphone and simultaneously working on a laptop computer. She has an ipod, but it is unplugged because she is already on the phone and the internet. The picture draws on a stereotypical contrast between tradition and modernity, the local worlds of ethnic minorities and the global realities that they are being pulled into

The introductory chapter, written by the three editors, relates some of the features of globalization, such as an increasing interconnectedness that may undermine the ties of culture and place, and gives an overview of national integration policies in the four countries. The bulk of this chapter is concerned with the results of surveys in Dai, Hmong, and Mien study villages. The findings persistently make statements in relation to ethnicity, such as that “77

percent [of Hmong in Vietnam stated] that they had a strong knowledge of the culture compared to 18 percent in Thailand and only 6 percent in China” (36). The samples are small, between 17 and 52 people in each setting, the largest from a town of 10,000 people. In the study villages, “individuals were asked to be interviewed by local representatives, often the village headman” (27). In at least two of the study areas, Doi Pui village in Chiangmai and the Dai Culture Park in Yunnan, the inhabitants make a living from looking ethnic to tourists. To rely on answers to survey questions administered by a government official and without any follow-up, from people whose livelihood depends on enacting certain ethnic stereotypes, is fundamentally naïve.

The chapter “Religious conversion and ethnic identity: The Karen and Akha in northern Thailand”, by Khwanchewan Buadeng and Panadda Boonyasaranai, is based on more convincing research methods, and builds on considerable familiarity with the research settings. The authors suggest that previously, people engaged with identity in relation to kin-groups and village membership, and argue that “ethnic identity, based on common descent and shared culture, has been constructed as part of the greater process of modernization and globalization” (62). This is an important argument, and one that challenges the ethnicist framework of the introductory chapter. Traditional religious practices among Akha and Karen united and divided people by village and kinship, by

patriline among the Akha and matriline among the Karen. Khwanchewan and Panadda’s account of conversions stresses individual and family decisions in relation to village factionalism and a range of options for affiliation. For some, there are on-going shifts among Buddhist, Catholic, and Protestant networks. At least for Karen, Ywa refers equally to their creator spirit, the Buddha, and the Christian God, and “many see them as the same being” (82).

Prasit Leepreecha writes on “The role of media technology in reproducing Hmong ethnic identity.” His chapter contains a valuable account of the pervasive Thai-ization that he experienced growing up in Thailand, and how he later reconnected to Hmong identity and culture as a budding academic. Prasit shows the complex interconnections that facilitate contemporary Hmong senses of identity. In the 1980s, Hmong in Thailand became aware of fellow Hmong in China and the West through a Hmong magazine published in the USA. The cultural knowledge that had been the preserve of elders and experts is now accessible to anyone literate in Hmong. Video CDs serve to create transnational links among Hmong peoples, and, along with embroidered story cloths, enable the remaking and reproduction of Hmong history. This includes a film that combines fiction and history and ends with the defeat of Pathet Lao forces by the Hmong. Alongside such fantasy outcomes, internet communication helps build a more positive self-esteem that counters the pervasive vilification of Hmong people in Thailand.

Nguyen Van Thang and Nguyen Thi Minh Nguyet describe “Changes in healing practices among the Hmong in Vietnam,” and Tran Van Ha and Le Minh Anh write on “The transformation of rituals in two Mien villages in North-east Vietnam.” The former chapter deals with the Sapa area of Lao Cai province, and the latter Quang Ninh province. Both are well informed and insightful, and show the complex interplay of government policies, economic changes, tourism, and international aid. The latter chapter shows and explores a resurgence in ritual activity by the 1990s. It mentions that many of the younger people intermarry with ethnic Vietnamese and are more keen on karaoke and Vietnamese pop music than local ritual practices. But the ethnic label Mien is misdirected in this case, and seems to draw on an editorial decision to replace official labels (such as Yao and Kariang) with local group-references that are more varied. The authors mention that they worked among Than Phan people (141), who are one kind of Yao (variously spelled Dao, Zao, and Dzao in Vietnam). The material on language, lineage names, and ritual practice is significantly different from what is known about Mien peoples. The choice of the Mien label creates an artificial similarity with other cases in the book, and detracts from this valuable study.

Three chapters on China show varied aspects of contemporary changes in the southwestern region. Xiong Zhang, Jinrong Liu and Ma Li write on “Hydropower development on the Lancang: A recommendation for affected minori-

ties,” He Shaoying, Lou Hailin, and Luo Ping write on “The inheritance of Dai culture and the preservation of Dai park in Xishungpanna,” and Liu Jiang writes on “Khmu identity and survival in globalizing China.” The chapter on hydroelectric dams shows how national policy threatens local livelihood, in this case Lahu, Yi, Hani, and Dai peoples. The government has policies aimed at mitigating any negative cultural impact, but so far these efforts all seem aimed at attracting tourists to culture shows and ethnic parks. The case of the Dai Culture Park shows what appears to be a genuine boost to the preservation of culture, and turns out to be a corporate profit-venture run by outsiders who relegate local Dai to low-paid jobs. The park fits a larger effort to expand tourism to help with economic development, but there are various disjunctures between national, corporate, and local interests.

“Somehow, I still think that my ID card is not quite right” (234). This quote is from a Khmu woman in Yunnan. Khmu are not recognized as a nationality in China, and the authorities insist that they register as Bulang, Hani, or Dai. Liu Jian’s informative chapter describes some of the Khmu people’s history along the Lao border, and the shift from swidden farming to rubber cultivation. Promoted as a move to prosperity, rubber farms have had devastating ecological consequences and have created significant economic vulnerability related to international market prices, something the Khmu had already experienced with sugar-cane farming in the 1980s.

Given this knowledge, it is somewhat disturbing to learn in the following chapter that Chinese entrepreneurs are establishing rubber and sugarcane cultivation across the border in Laos. Houmphang Rattanavong's chapter on "The changing livelihoods of the Akha in Muang Sing and Muang Long in Laos" describes various challenges to Akha livelihood. Many adverse effects relate to the eradication of opium cultivation and a move to the lowlands. The chapter concludes with a range of suggestions for a reasoned approach to the range of social, ecological, and economic problems in the area.

Don McCaskill's chapter on the "Transformation of Hmong Culture and Identity" combines a theoretical discussion of globalization, objective and subjective realities, with the results of surveys and interviews in Doi Pui village on Doi Suthep, above Chiangmai City. In contrast to the fieldwork-based chapters that make up most of the book, the material comes across as superficial. In spite of the theoretical ambitions of the chapter, the material never goes beyond verbal statements about such things as "the most important things in Hmong culture" (303) and a list of the "most important factors that caused the changes to Hmong culture" (310). In the book's Epilogue, Pinkaew Laungaramsri ably draws together some of the book's collective findings in a discussion anchored to the dynamics of state control, globalization, and the negotiation over tradition.

The book is an example of new kinds of collaborations, but at the same time it

appears to reinforce national boundaries and ethnic divides. Chinese scholars study matters in China, Thai scholars Thailand, and so on. For the most part, the scholars are ethnic majority people (along with a Westerner) looking at their minorities. There are important exceptions in the book, and it would be a nice experiment to have a similar group of researchers trade places and make sense of ethnicity, development, economic disparities and the like in each other's countries. Among the things to explore, aside from trends in development and change in minority areas, is the importance of national research traditions and to what extent they lend particular shape to how we understand the basic matters of identity, culture, national histories, and global dynamics. This book raises a range of excellent questions, and provides valuable cases with which to think about the changes taking place in the region. One of the unanswered questions is how the Greater Mekong Subregion becomes a framework for engaging with the world, and what difference it makes that this notion is actively backed by the Asian Development Bank. If a major financial institution can define how scholars demarcate their fields, it is certainly worthy of some exploration. Studies of ethnic minorities are still important, but it is to be hoped that other dimensions of globalization and the making of regions also come into view as cultural and social phenomena worthy of serious study.

Hjorleifur Jonsson

Nancy Eberhardt, *Imagining the Course of Life: Self-Transformation in a Shan Buddhist Community*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2006, xiv+244 pp., pb, Bt 695.

Drawing on two extended periods of ethnographic fieldwork in the 1980s and 1990s conducted in a Shan village in Mae Hong Son province, Eberhardt has written a compelling account of Shan perceptions of selfhood, life trajectories, and well-being as articulated in everyday life experiences, ritual practices, and community activities. Central to her argument is the dialectical and fluid relationship between individual self and society embedded in the Shan theories of human development, the theories she would rather call “Shan theories of person development” (p.165), as they transcend the rigid and linear course of change. A contribution to the field of ethno-psychological study, the book not only fills the recognizable gap in the literature on indigenous world views and practices of selfhood and ‘life course’ in mainland Southeast Asia, but also offers a reflexive formulation of how such issues can be contemplated beyond the conventional boundaries between Buddhist doctrine and popular religion, culture and psychology, mind and body, thought and feeling, and individual and society.

Opening with an account of a healing rite, Eberhardt delves into the heart of the Shan thinking and practice of a healthy self. For the Shan, the body is not only a physical entity, but a contested site

between two opposing forces: the soul (*khwan*) and the spirit (*phi*). Although both life forces are in a transformative continuum of births and deaths, the separation between the two realms, the life-world *khwan* and the spirit-world *phi*, is essential in maintaining the well-being of the body and self. Through *pat phi* (sweeping away the spirits) and *haung khwan* (calling the souls), the spirit is driven away, the soul is propitiated and thus there is a reconnection of *khwan* and body in a reinstalled self. The connection between *khwan* and self is, however, disrupted at the time of death, when *khwan* becomes *phi*, setting off on a new passage of life to be reborn again. Yet the path towards this transition can be divergent, depending on the nature of death (usual or tragic) and degree of emotional attachments of the dead to loved ones and home. Merits made for the deceased through proper funerals and offering ceremonies such as *kotsaa*, a merit-making ceremony performed in the eleventh lunar month for those who have died in the previous year, are therefore crucial to facilitate the process of transformation and to ensure the disconnection between the life and spirit worlds.

But self is never an empty entity or a complete coherence since birth. The stories of rebirth are captivating accounts of how past selves and present souls are constantly re-interconnected in the actual world. As the deceased is reborn into a new child, the process of guiding the self towards maturity starts anew. Eberhardt nicely draws a common thread between

spirits, souls, and children, showing how each share a basic nature of immature self—the temptation and susceptibility of being lured by desires. The hungry spirit can be manipulated and controlled through human rites. The wandering soul needs the right treat to be persuaded to return to the body. The wild child is to be tamed and taught to know how to be self-restrained. All of these are significant processes in which selves are domesticated and made mature.

Shan people maintain their health and well-being personally and collectively through ritual assistance. The story of three annual rituals which were performed in one day, illustrated by Eberhardt, is a good example of how the technology of rituals is extensively employed by villagers to sustain various levels of healthy life. The *mei wan* (repairing the village) is aimed at purification and revitalization. The *liang tsao moeng* (feasting the village guardian spirit) is to reaffirm the reverential relationship with the guardian spirit whose power protects the livelihoods of village members. The *song phi* (sending away the spirits) leads bad spirits out of the realm of the human world. These are only a few of the countless rituals performed by the Shan in order to ensure the well-being of the self. Rituals as cultural strategies thus allow the Shan properly to prepare themselves to cope with the uncertainty of the world they live in.

*Pau Sang Long*, the well-known Shan novice ordination, is another terrain of ritual Eberhardt explores at great

length in order to see how this theatrical rite represents a site of multiple forms of maturity-making. Her way of capturing this ritual is interesting and her interpretation revealing. Whereas much of the literature on Buddhism and gender emphasizes gender inequality, Eberhardt highlights the agency aspect of gender relations, the role of woman sponsors in the ritual and the social meaning embedded in their active involvement. In so doing, she demonstrates to the reader how *Pau Sang Long* is simultaneously a unique rite of passage for boys and a rite of maternity for middle-aged women. As the ordination symbolizes the path towards adulthood of young boys, it is also enthusiastically anticipated by women. Through the devoted role of *mae kham*, the sponsor of the novice ordination, the rite of *Pau Sang Long* comes to mark the rite of maturity for both men and women, by which women sponsors also gain respectable status and prestige through their dedication.

For the Shan, maturity as a form of self-transformation does not end when one achieves adulthood, but continues while aging. In old age, one learns to understand life and reality more deeply through detachment from the worldly world, the process Eberhardt calls “the second socialization”. Long years of knowledge and experience, and closer connections with Buddhist practices, allow old people, especially temple-sleepers, to gain insightful contemplation of life, ‘personhood’, and self-control, a significant moral stage of human development looked up to by the young ones in the community.

*Imagining the Course of Life* is a rich and engaging ethnography. Eberhardt's stories are entertaining; one can feel the lively presence and energetic involvement of the anthropologist in everyday life of the Shan world as she moves from one ritual to the other. Focusing on specific events, yet with broader cultural reflections, this ethnography is a fascinating achievement of how dualism between personal understanding of self and human development and structural imperative of the cultural world can be resolved without abandoning its tension. The final chapter also suggests further terrains of exploration, including changes and their implications, significant topics that deserve closer investigation.

This is a work of great value, not only to the field of ethno-psychology in particular but also to students of mainland Southeast Asia more broadly. Those who are particularly interested in ritual, selfhood, and human development will find the book both insightful and illuminating.

Pinkaew Laungaramsri

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Vatthana Pholsena and Ruth Banomyong, *Laos: From Buffer State to Crossroads?* translated by Michael Smithies. Chiang Mai, Mekong Press, 2006, 225 pp., Bt 525.

At first glance, the sub-title of this book *From Buffer State to Crossroads?* suggests that what is on offer is an historical argument about how Laos has evolved over the past two decades, with just some doubt insinuated by that coy question mark. But this is misleading. What the book is about, rather, is revealed by its original French title: *Le Laos au XXI siècle: Les défis de l'intégration régionale* (Laos in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: The challenges of regional integration).

The approach the two authors have adopted is analytical, rather than historical. The first three chapters make the case for Laos as a buffer state; examine its subsequent integration into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); and assess the continuing importance of relations with Vietnam and Thailand. The next four chapters analyse the situation Laos faces today: the problems posed by aspects of its underdevelopment; by subregional transportation and communications links; by cross-border contacts and influences; along with some of the social responses to changes taking place.

The argument that Laos had developed as a buffer state between expanding Vietnamese and Siamese empires, which had been in conflict with each other for 'over a thousand years', was

first made by Hugh Toye in his book *Laos: Buffer State or Battleground* (1968). This, for Toye, provided the historical basis for what he believed should have been the role of Laos during the Cold War: to be a neutral buffer state, in preference to becoming a battleground for contending ideologies. Pholsena and Banomyong broadly accept the notion of Laos as historically a buffer state, as they indicate by their sub-title and in their introductory chapter. Given this context, Laos as crossroads is a new departure, though as the authors point out (pp. 131–134), it was always linked by trade to the region.

I read Lao history rather differently. The movement of peoples in mainland Southeast Asia has historically been from north to south, following the flow of great rivers (the Irrawaddy, the Chao Phraya, the Mekong), or down the coast of Vietnam. Conquests were at the expense of the Pyu, the Mon, the Khmer and the Cham. The Lao were part of this north-south movement, along with the Burmese, Siamese and Vietnamese. The kingdom (*mandala*) of Lan Xang that the Lao constructed on the middle Mekong was not a buffer state: it was a kingdom of comparable extent and might to Siam and Dai Viet, a kingdom which successfully defended its unity and independence from invaders from both east and west.

Only after Lan Xang split into three (Luang Phrabang, Viang Chan and Champasak) in the early eighteenth century were these weakened Lao kingdoms eventually forced to accept

the suzerainty of Siam. Even then they were not buffer states: they were tributary *meuang* of the expanded Siamese *mandala*. But they also maintained political relations with Vietnam and China as well as Siam, relations which ebbed and flowed in proportion to the relative power and interests of each.

The culture of Lao foreign relations was never shaped by the idea of neutrality or being a buffer between contending powers. It was shaped by the infinitely flexible political structure of the *meuang*, whose nested hierarchical relationships comprised the *mandala* of Meuang Lao. No fixed frontiers held antagonistic kingdoms apart. Trade and diplomacy in the form of tribute missions kept the Lao kingdoms in constant contact with the region. Even after the destruction of Viang Chan (Vientiane) in the Lao-Siamese war of 1827–28, Lao *meuang*, most notably Luang Phrabang, but also the Sipsong Chau Thai, Xiang Khuang and some lesser *meuang* on the Mahaxai Plateau, kept up regional contacts designed not to maintain some kind of neutrality, but to preserve a degree of independence through a flexible accounting of power relationships.

Only with the arrival of antagonistic European powers was the notion of a buffer state introduced into Southeast Asian political thought – and then, as Pholsena and Banomyong acknowledge, it applied to Siam, not Laos. The Lao territories were divided: what is Laos today was part of French Indochina; the rest remained part of Siam. The French justified their rule over

Laos (and Cambodia) as protection from Siamese domination, only to open the way to domination by Vietnam.

Only with the advent of the Cold War was independent Laos cast in the role of a buffer state between communist North Vietnam and capitalist Thailand. But it was a role that rested solely on the interference of outside powers. Laos was in fact not neutral, but divided into spheres of control: Chinese in the north (after 1962), Vietnamese down the eastern mountains, and US/Thai along the Mekong valley. After 1975, Laos was tightly tied to Vietnam. It took the Third Indochina War to begin to unravel Vietnamese 'regional hegemony', and the 'solution' of the Cambodian conflict in 1993 to complete it (despite the continuing Lao-Vietnamese 'special relationship' – on which more below).

Laos as a neutral buffer state was an invention of the West, an intrusion of Western strategic thinking into Southeast Asia. Once the West withdrew, once Vietnam no longer possessed the prop of the Soviet Union, the countries of Southeast Asia could begin to revert to the regional relationships they previously enjoyed. The 'great power' in the region is once again China. But there is no military/strategic alliance among mainland Southeast Asian states to 'balance' Chinese power and no buffer between them. Security for mainland Southeast Asian states derives, as it traditionally did, from diplomacy underwritten by moral expectations, recognition of China's status, and the mutual benefits of trade. This may not

satisfy realist analysts, but it worked fairly well in the past.

This interpretation dispenses with the notion of Laos as a buffer state as a temporary Western imposition, an aberration in the historical pattern of mainland Southeast Asian regional relations. What we now see is a return to more flexible and more firmly historically grounded relationships, but in the modern guise of ASEAN.

Pholsena and Banomyong devote the best part of a chapter to considering why Laos (and Vietnam and Cambodia) joined ASEAN, and the challenges and benefits this poses for Vientiane. While the authors give due weight to the end of the Cold War and the UN 'solution' in Cambodia, they do not, I think, take sufficient account of the extent to which the Lao decision depended on Vietnam. This is not to say that Lao reasons for joining ASEAN were the same as those of Vietnam: just that if Vietnam had not joined, Laos would not have become a member.

For Vietnam, security in the face of a rising China was the first consideration. Given the events of 1979 and disputed sovereignty over islands in the South China Sea, Vietnam was desperate not to face China alone. China would be less likely to attack a member of ASEAN than to teach an isolated Vietnam a second 'lesson'. But this was not a primary concern of the Lao. Pholsena and Banomyong examine three sets of explanations of why Laos joined ASEAN, which are really accounts of what Laos stood to gain. A neo-institutionalist

argument is that Laos would benefit from inclusion in ASEAN's cooperative multilateral institutions to raise its voice in world forums. A realist view would be that Lao national security would be protected, not as in the case of Vietnam from China, but from Thailand, which fought a more recent border war with Laos in 1988.

The authors prefer a constructionist perspective. They argue that joining ASEAN permits Laos to contribute to building a 'security community', by means of which it would be able to pursue a genuinely neutralist foreign policy of peace and friendship with all other states (even if some friends, like Vietnam, remain more equal than others.) Though the authors do not stress this point, such a policy has the benefit of ensuring that Laos continues to receive aid and investment from the widest possible cross-section of donors.

A chapter is devoted to examining bilateral relations with both Vietnam and Thailand. The roots of the 'special relationship' with Vietnam are found in the events of 1945 when, at the direction of the communist controlled Vietminh front, Vietnamese living in Laos seized power in the Lao Mekong towns alongside the Lao Issara (Free Lao) nationalists and a handful of Lao Marxists. From there we jump to the establishment of a Pathet Lao liberated zone in northeast Laos in 1953, thanks to Vietminh forces. And from 1953 we leap to the present. There is no mention of the decade of warfare from 1964 to 1973, during which Lao and Vietnamese

forces fought side-by-side under the rain of American bombs. Yet this was the period when the all-important military relationship was consolidated.

For it is the military relationship above all that has caused the 'special relationship' to persist, not that in its current form it is 'multidimensional'. Since the death of Laos's first state and party president, Kaysone Phomvihane, who was half Vietnamese, his two successors have both been army commanders. It is true, however, as the authors argue, that the relationship is mutually beneficial in terms of both trade (legal and illegal, mainly timber) and security. Vietnam has always understood the relationship as strategic, as protecting its long and vulnerable western frontier.

The analysis of the 'tense' relationship between Laos and Thailand is much more searching and revealing, as one might expect from authors who are, respectively, Lao and Thai. But here again there is a curious lacuna. No mention is made of the event that still bulks large in Lao national consciousness – the sack of Viang Chan. Just as the Thai can never forget the utter destruction of Ayutthaya at the hands of the Burmese, so the Lao can never forget the equally total destruction of Viang Chan and the brutal treatment of its ruling family.

The relationship with China is only mentioned in passing, as 'an increasing influence'. But it is more than that. The Chinese presence in Laos is growing steadily. Substantial numbers of Chinese have moved into northern Lao towns, where much of the commerce is now in

their hands. Chinese companies have built factories, established plantations and begun mining. Their expanding political influence has been at the expense of the Vietnamese. Already the Lao are careful to balance their relations with Hanoi and Beijing. Once the last of the revolutionary generation of Lao military leaders have retired, the balance may well tip in China's favour.

Chapter four moves directly to the Lao economy, but the reader is not sure why. No attempt is made to set the chapter in the context of the transition from buffer state to crossroads. The discussion is informed and informative, and one assumes that the point being made is that Laos is ill-prepared to stand as some kind of sub-regional economic hub. The weakness of Lao financial institutions and the country's economic dependency are stressed. This is contrasted with self-sufficiency in food production.

Economic dependency is indicated by the country's balance of payments deficit, which the authors argue will not be quickly reversed by the construction of large dams (notably the Nam Theun II) and sale of hydropower to Thailand, the only buyer. There is, however, no discussion of mining. Yet in 2005 and 2006, the value of Lao exports grew faster than for any other ASEAN member state, thanks largely to the boost provided by mineral exports from the large Australian owned and operated gold and copper mine at Sepone in central Laos (which also provided substantial revenue to the Lao government.) (Statistics in the French publication of 2004 have been

updated for the English edition, but still run a few years late. "The last three years" mentioned at one point actually refer to 2000–2003.)

In chapter 5 the authors address that question mark in their title: does the future of Laos lie in becoming the crossroads (or in their terminology, the 'logistics platform') of mainland Southeast Asia? Forms of, and improvements to, transportation and communications are discussed with the help of tables on such matters as comparative transport costs and time spent at frontier crossings. The roles played by ASEAN agreements and the Asian Development Bank in promoting its Greater Mekong Sub-region project (which includes the Chinese province of Yunnan as well as mainland Southeast Asian states) are examined, but the authors rightly conclude that such theoretical concepts as 'growth areas' (triangles, quadrilaterals) including parts of Laos and 'economic corridors' following transport routes across the country "still have to prove their worth on the ground."

Nevertheless, as the authors correctly assert in chapter 6, there is no possibility that landlocked Laos can remain semi-isolated from the global changes sweeping the rest of Southeast Asia. A massive increase in tourism, increasing labour migration, epidemics such as HIV/Aids and SARS, and smuggling of timber (the example they examine), livestock and wildlife, all cut across borders and force Laos to confront the challenges of expanding regional integration. But then, as the authors point out, to claim

that historically Laos was isolated from the region was to perpetuate a myth.

Chapter 7 turns to social change, the failure of Marxism, the crisis of political legitimisation and the resurgence of Buddhism. The attitudes of Lao youth are revealed through answers to the Vientiane Social Survey, and the chapter ends with a brief note on ethnic minorities in the face of resettlement and regional integration. Each is of interest, but treated as separate issues.

The conclusion is inconclusive, because at the end of the day the authors present no clearly argued case, either in terms of direction of change or of the economic and political challenges Laos faces today. Both can be glimpsed but could have been presented in a more connected way. That said, any book on Laos is a welcome addition to a woefully small literature, and this book is packed with useful information that will be new to most readers. There is a chronology that runs from 1353, the date of the founding of Lan Xang, to 2005, and a useful bibliography and index. The translation from the French by Michael Smithies runs smoothly, making the book an easy read.

Martin Stuart-Fox

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Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h, *The Armies of Angkor: Military Structure and Weaponry of the Khmers*, translated by Michael Smithies, Bangkok, Orchid Press, 2007, xiii + 178 pp., Bt 1,350.

Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h, Orchid Press, and Michael Smithies as translator of the original French edition, are all to be congratulated for the publication of this book with its intriguing subject. As Jean Boissellier points out in his Preface, the study of narrative bas-reliefs in the temples of Angkor have been of great importance for our understanding of a society that left behind such a limited number of written—or, more correctly, incised—records. Today, as scholarship has advanced so substantially, it is all too easy, even for a less-than-casual visitor to Angkor, to fail to recognise how much has been deduced from approximately 1,200 inscriptions, many of which have little to do with the material life of the Angkorian period. It is in these circumstances that the importance of narrative bas-reliefs has long been recognised. Lunet de Lajonquière, whose fame rests on his having been responsible for mapping temple sites throughout Cambodia in the first two decades of the twentieth century, observed in 1911 that temple bas-reliefs constituted 'a veritable mine of information' about Angkorian society and urged scholars to exploit this 'mine'. This was a challenge partially met by George Groslier, in his *Recherches sur les Cambodgiens, d'après les textes et les monuments depuis les premiers siècles de notre ère*, published in Paris

in 1921. And through his work, and that of others, much information has been assembled about daily life in Cambodia. The bas-reliefs along the outer galleries of the Bayon are, of course, the best-known sources in this regard.

Yet, again quoting Boisselier, surprisingly enough the armies so frequently displayed in these bas-reliefs have not received the attention they deserve, and it is here that our gratitude must go to the present author. In meticulous detail, and sensibly using line drawings rather than photographs for the greater clarity this achieves, deals with the entire gamut of military aspects associated with the royal armies that existed during the reigns of Suryavarman II and Jayavarman VII and which were depicted on three key temples: Angkor Wat, the Bayon and Banteay Chmar. In doing so, Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h sets himself three aims: the selection of bas-reliefs and the study of the weapons used by the different constituents of the army; the study of these constituent parts and their relative importance to each other; and, finally, an examination of the crowds of people surrounding the armies that are depicted. All of this is done against the conclusion that, contrary to the assumptions of various previous commentators, the Khmer armies were not modelled on traditional armies in India.

In each of the sections just mentioned the author approaches his task in detail, so that what follows is greatly simplified and should be seen in this light. In terms of weaponry, Jacq-Hergoualc'h makes clear that, with the exception of

a limited number of 'war machines', for example, a chariot-like mount with defensive shielding used by warriors to launch their spears (figure 29, page 37) or other primitive 'ballistae', including ones mounted on elephants, the armaments of the Khmer army were 'fairly primitive' and included swords of various types, axes, bows and arrows and spears.

From his examination of the bas-reliefs, the author concludes that the Khmer armies of the period under review were composed of four basic corps: war chariots, cavalry, elephants and the infantry. To this he adds a further classification, allies and mercenaries, while giving separate attention to enemies, and treating the use of boats for warfare as a separate classification. In his detailed examination of these various fighting arms the author comes to a conclusion that would not surprise soldiers of many wars, past and present. Impressive though the cavalry might have been, and intimidating as the elephants surely were, in the end it would seem that the most important role in any battle was that played by the group known for centuries, irreverently, as the 'poor bloody infantry'. As the author puts it, the elephants were 'so impressive, so numerous, so cumbersome, and possibly so useless'. Images of tanks, incompetently used as they were during the First World War, before their role was rethought by strategists as diverse as Liddell Hart, Charles de Gaulle and Hans Guderian, immediately come to mind. And likewise with his analysis

of battles fought on water, the images that he conjures up sit more closely with accounts of Salamis or even Lepanto than any later naval engagements in which armaments and manoeuvrability played a vital role. To the extent the bas-reliefs have a story to tell, it is of the boats of rival armies seeking to join battle alongside each other, with the hope of each boat's crew that it could board and overcome its opponents.

Following his discussion of accessories and camp followers, the author offers a tightly formulated 'conclusion' reinforcing his arguments for the paramount importance of the infantry and the uniquely Khmer character of the army. But he does more, for he allows his imagination, soundly based on what he has written and analysed previously, to give us a picture of how he believes the army appeared as it marched off to battle. It is a vision of colour and noise, of a 'shimmering multitude of parasols, standards and insignia', of bells and strummed instruments and 'the booming gong'. As he writes, 'what a din that must have made!'

Specialist in character though this book undoubtedly is, its appearance will be welcomed by all those for whom a visit to Angkor is more than an occasion for a brief, if wondrous, excursion. The author is to be commended for his contribution to our greater understanding of a society that still remains so elusive in many ways.

Milton Osborne

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Joyce Clark, ed., *Bayon: New perspectives*. Contributors: Ang Choulean, Olivier Cunin, Claude Jacques, T.S. Maxwell, Vittorio Roveda, Anne-Valérie Schweyer, Peter D. Sharrock, Michael Vickery, and Hiram Woodward. Bangkok, River Books, 2007, ix–409 pp., numerous colour and b/w ills, bibliography, glossaries, index.

Last of the 'temple-mountains' built at Angkor, the Bayon embodies several centuries of architectural tradition – even if borrowings from Angkor Wat, the earlier twelfth century state temple, are the most evident. In addition, the Bayon is the first and only Buddhist Khmer state temple and, contrary to Borobudur (which is in a way its Javanese counterpart), it was from the beginning conceived and built as a Buddhist monument. That, however, in the Angkorean context, does not imply structural differences with Brahmanistic monuments, but signifies another old Khmer tradition most probably nourished by fresh ideas derived from India around the end of the eleventh century, perhaps even later (but definitely before the exodus from India of Buddhist theologians alluded to by Tāranātha, the Tibetan historian). It is on such a double architectural and ideological basis that the Bayon was 'invented' by individual or numerous artists and theologians from the retinue of Jayavarman VII, bearing in mind that theology and political science were there closely linked, and also remembering that the initial construction was followed by one

or several revisions (to say nothing of post-Jayavarman VII avatars).

These various orientations determine the framework of any investigative study about the Bayon: one cannot avoid questioning traditions, inventions and revisions and it may better to deal with the several disciplinary fields involved separately. The present book is made up of ten papers (including a foreword and an introduction), which guarantees multiplicity. This being the case, not being the integrated study which was planned at the start (see the editor's preface), it looks very much like those *festschriften* where each author deals with his own topic in his own way and with little regard to what may be found in the other papers. Internal cross references are few and connection between 'materialistic' and 'idealistic' (Vickery's terms) specialists is rarely evident. Thus one is surprised to see that nobody has told Vickery that the (so-called) Dufour ground plan of the Bayon is not to be taken as a reference: like all pre-Dumarçay Bayon ground plans, it is erroneous and marked by several oddities such as a supplementary but non-existent tower on the western side of the monument (it may be said in the defence of Vickery that the same Dufour plan illustrating the Bayon appears in a scholarly Angkor guidebook recently published in Bangkok and Geneva). Lastly, some topics are dealt with repeatedly in several papers and one looks in vain for at least a kind of integrative synthesis (e.g. about the face-towers or the so-called 'gallery passages', alias *kui*).

Hiram Woodward's foreword contains, as usual, stimulating suggestions (especially about Buddhist "layers" which may be identified). Michael Vickery's task in the 'Introduction' was more complicated, for he had to present the preceding research, to summarise in an integrated overview the other papers and to express his own ideas. For the past, the presentation is rapid and, as often with this book, work done in the 1960s (especially Dumarçay's) is overlooked, with the result indicated above with the Bayon ground plan. An excursus on the name of the Bayon could have been enhanced by the first mention of the Bayon in Europe found in the English edition (1864, v.II p.2) of Mouhot's diary (which is far more complete than the French one referred to here): known as *Prea sat Ling poun*, it meant, according to Mouhot, "the Pagoda where they play hide and seek." As regards the vexed problem of the certain Shaivite upsurge during the thirteenth century (notwithstanding Claude Jacques), the Jayavarman VIII hypothesis seems a little late for a phenomena which had seemingly quietened down by the time of Zhou Daguan's sojourn in Angkor. In any case, as I have related elsewhere, the Indian and sectarian origin of that violent fundamentalist but short-lived phenomenon is more likely than its attribution to a deliberate royal policy of one of Jayavarman VII's successors.

Claude Jacques, in 'The historical development of Khmer culture from the death of Sūryavarman II to the sixteenth century', expands on the theory he has

been developing for some years and which denies any decline at Angkor after the death of Jayavarman VII. To give it a 'materialistic' ground, he lengthens the construction period of the monuments of the so-called Bayon style, while attributing to the rule of Jayavarman VIII (in the second half of the thirteenth century) some specific changes brought to older monuments (Phimai, Baphuon, as well as Angkor Wat or Beng Mealea). However, archaeological and architectural evidence put forward are mere hypotheses, as is the replacement of the Buddha statue in the sanctum of the Bayon by a Harihara image, to say nothing of the interpretation of the notes of Zhou Dagan. Claude Jacques' paper ends with an excursus about the "gallery passages" or *kui*. On that point I must add that such temporary structures built with thin walls and light covering are most probably those 'provisional temples' (*balālaya*, *balagha*, etc., literally 'infant temples'), which in the Indian tradition are used to shelter the cult image (or a substitute for it) of a temple or chapel during repairs or under construction.

A.-V. Schweyer's paper, 'The confrontation of the Khmers and Chams in the Bayon period', starts with a tedious military history of Khmer-Cham relations between circa 1050 and Jayavarman VII, in the middle of which is inserted a short excursus on 'Khmer influence on Cham art'; however, the statues dealt with are testimonies of Khmer colonial art at the time of Jayavarman VII, while temples of Banhit reflect Khmer architecture of the late

tenth century more than of the twelfth. Dealing with the events of 1177, the author follows Vickery but with some curious arguments (Chams being excellent sailors, they do not need a Chinese guide, or as there is a good land route, why come via the Mekong and the Tonle Sap?). More interesting is the development dealing with the control of Champa by the Khmers during the reign of Jayavarman VII and the emphasis on the expression 'the 32 year war' applied to the period of Khmer occupation in Cham inscriptions.

As usual, T.S. Maxwell's paper, 'Religion of the time of Jayavarman VII', is a very stimulating one, even if one is inclined to differ on many points. It starts by a presentation of the coming of Indian religions to South-East Asia, interestingly but surprisingly leaving out reference to the numerous imported Indian Sanskrit texts, which are the backbone of Indian culture in South-East Asia. Some statements may be doubtful, such as the opposition of a southern Funan where Viṣṇu would have been predominant while the north was the field of the cult of Śiva, but he insists rightly on what he calls 'Hindu-Buddhist tendency' or 'coalescence', giving some good examples (e.g. Prasat Ampil Rolum and inscriptions K. 162–163). He could have added that Khmer architecture as a whole is non-sectarian and that the shift of a cult-place from one creed to another is easy and not rare (e.g. Bat Chum in the tenth century). Lastly, when dealing with the immediate background of Jayavarman VII, it would

have been better to have taken notice of the important Mahayanist temples built in the decades preceding his reign and where plenty of place is allowed for Brahmanic themes (e.g. Beng Mealea and the series of ‘temples d’étapes’ (staging-post temples) between Angkor and Prah Khan of Kompong Svay). After a confused presentation of the Bayon’s ‘short inscriptions’, comes an excursus of several pages on the face towers. Maxwell seems inclined, like nineteenth century travellers, to look for their invention outside Cambodia, that is to say, in India, but where? It is not very clear. He establishes a dubious parallel between those faces applied to a tower’s main body and Indian *śukanāsa* pediments which pertain to foreparts (and are exact counterparts of the numerous Khmer porch pediments). While leaving aside once more the textual background, Maxwell then emphasises in a footnote the idea of ‘Southeast Asian voyagers visiting India and returning with useful elements of that culture’, for which it would be good to be given at least some positive arguments. Regarding the short inscriptions, he elaborates on their role and on their absence in some places where images could have been installed, while not mentioning the problem of the date of their engraving and of their possible relative chronology. Then dealing with the gods they list, he extends some remarks made by Coedès in 1913 to suggest that the Buddha of the central sanctum of the Bayon is in fact the Hindu god Harihara. We have already seen that C. Jacques suggested that a Hari-

hara image *replaced* that of the Buddha at the time of Jayavarman VIII. Let us remember, however, that of the two goddesses whose presence in inscriptions leads to the creation of those hypothetic Harihara, one (Dharaṇī) is a common Buddhist deity, while the other (Pārvatī) is said in the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* to be a future Buddha! Further on, Maxwell questions the rationale of worshipping numerous ‘separate images of the same aspect of the same Buddha in a single temple’. Let us remember the more than one hundred Śivaliṅgas occupying each a chapel in the Phnom Bakheng temple at Angkor or are installed in the galleries of Bṛhadīśvara temple in Tanjore in South India. The same kind of remark may be made about what is said concerning the installation of a new image near an older one, a triviality in Cambodia as in India; this being the case, Maxwell well shows the Khmers’ profound knowledge of Indian culture, knowledge which allows them to invent new interpretations for their own use. T.S. Maxwell appends to his paper a synchronistic edition and translation of all ‘The short inscriptions of the Bayon and contemporary temples’. Though convenient, it is however difficult to use without going back to the more precise works of Coedès or Groslier.

Olivier Cunin covers the materialistic aspect of the temple but his paper ‘The Bayon: an archaeological and architectural study’, the longest of the book, has been little used by other authors. It is lavishly illustrated by numerous plans and cross-sections (most of them seem-

ingly based upon Dumarçay's), as well as useful axonometric or bird's eye view reconstructions. In its reconstruction of the outer gallery, Cunin proposes that it comprised eight face towers, using simultaneously some elements of such towers found in the 'Commaille heaps' and the Banteay Chmar model; the hypothesis is interesting, but remains to be verified by actual reconstruction of some, at least, of the supposed face towers. However, his most important contribution is to propose a rearrangement of the chronology of the construction work of the Bayon, a rearrangement based upon several criteria, among which and for the most part comprise the study of magnetic variation of sandstone by the University of Waseda petrology team. The result is a chronology more compact than Dumarçay's (especially concerning the third level); it seems as a whole quite convincing, even if some new findings may appear a little doubtful (e.g. concerning the gallery of the second level). Some remarks seem a little hasty (e.g. about the so-called library-like towers 50 and 51 and their relation to towers 19 and 20). This being the case, one may again deplore the fact that Peter S. Sharrock is, amongst the other authors, the only one who has applied an idealistic eye to the results of O. Cunin's very materialistic study.

The faces of the Bayon (and some other monuments) have often been dealt with, but the paper by Peter D. Sharrock, 'The mystery of the face towers', is welcome. It furnishes a fair review of the present state of the studies, gives

precise hints about possible connection with Nepal face stupas and lastly elaborates three interpretations: Hevajra, Vajradhāra and Vajrasattva. Hevajra is very popular, as shown by several bronze images and a single huge but dilapidated and dismembered statue found near the eastern gate of Angkor Thom. However, its multiple heads would make it unsuitable for face towers (this may or may not be so). Vajrasattva and Vajradhāra share several features and appear quite frequently in Jayavarman VII monuments: Vajradhāra especially in hospital temple libraries, while Vajrasattva is often found on internal lintels of Buddhist shrines (at Prah Khan of Kompong Svay it appears on lintels of small shrines and has been subsequently deprived of upper arms, probably in order to be more coherent with Theravāda iconography!). Sharrock's argument (based *inter alia* upon votive tablets showing the Mahayanist pantheon, see Woodward's article of 1981) leads him finally to propose the Vajrasattva face as the one seen on the Bayon towers. While admiring Sharrock's well-documented 'theological' argument, I wonder if it takes into account the Bayon's political aspect and function.

Vittorio Roveda, in his paper, 'Reliefs of the Bayon', deals with the monument's iconography as a whole (excepting the faces on the towers) and in a general way looks at it more or less in a synchronic mode. The paper is an inventory (first of the reliefs of galleries, then of the pediments and some lintels of towers), followed by some

proposals of interpretation. The inventory is quite cursory, especially for the galleries, where a good visual memory of the reliefs is often needed to follow descriptions as given, but there are very good photographs of some of the hidden pediments of the second level towers. For the interpretation of the outer gallery, Roveda follows the views of Vickery and Schweyer about the naval battle, adding new questionable arguments (the boats are not sea-going ships) and proposes that it is a 'mythic' (rather, 'mock') battle commemorating the non-existent historical one. The arguments he gives against the identification of Malyan rebellion are probably more specious (Cham inscriptions tell us that Cham troops attended the event but do not appear on the carved scene). Concerning the inner gallery, the distinction between original and re-carved images is sometimes questionable (e.g. about Śiva's image in room VIII), but it is well-known that there may be endless discussions about this point.

The conclusion of the book is given by Ang Choulean, whose paper has a title 'In the beginning was the Bayon' I would willingly reverse, as the legacy of the past reflected in the Bayon is often left aside in this book. This being the case, Ang Choulean shows us how the Bayon is at the centre of re-appropriation by the present-day Khmer cosmogical myths figured at Angkor, primarily the Churning of the Sea of Milk. He also reminds us that the reinterpretation of the Bayon, as of Angkor as a whole, has been a continuous process since the

fifteenth century and that the sixteenth century marks an important date in this interpretation.

To conclude, this collective work is more stimulating in the divergent interpretations it gives to some specific subjects than as a general presentation of the present state of studies of the Bayon. It is therefore a good addition to the bibliography dealing with the most puzzling period of Angkorean history. Lastly, we should indicate that the fine general appearance of the book is impaired by use of a very small type and of an even smaller one for footnotes, which are virtually illegible. Narrower margins and the suppression of some figures of little interest would have contributed to a less tiresome reading without increasing the number of pages. Misprints are few but one of them concerns an old master of Khmer epigraphy, Au Chhieng, whose name is misspelt (Au Chhing) in the text as in the index, but not in the bibliography. In that last the reference to Jacques Dumarçay's seminal *Atlas* has been muddled: it should be ascribed to 1967 and not to 1973, which is the date of the book co-authored with B.-Ph. Groslier.

Bruno Dagens

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Olivier Cunin and Baku Saito, *The Face Towers of Banteay Chmar*. Tokyo, Goto Shoin Publishing, 2005, 141 pp.

The monumental and awe-inspiring stone faces of Angkor that smile so enigmatically upon the Cambodian countryside have intrigued Western artists and scholars for more than a century, but for one Japanese photographer they have become a passion. Baku Saito began travelling to Cambodia in the early 1990s. His frequent solo excursions brought him in touch with a land visited at the time by only a few foreign travelers. The scenery and architecture captured his imagination and in 1994 he decided to photograph all of the monumental stone faces that still existed at Angkor. The project to document all 228 of the faces took six years and culminated in the publication of a UNESCO sponsored book "Bayon I – The Faces of the Towers, Part I Plates".

While Saito's photography of all the faces of Angkor met with great acclaim and an UNESCO sponsored exhibition, the photographer was not satisfied with his work because he soon discovered that similar faces to those appearing at Angkor Thom and the Bayon could be found at two other locations in Cambodia: Banteay Chmar, a site which lies over 100 kilometres northwest of Angkor and close to the Thai border, and Preah Khan at Kompong Svay, which is located to the east of Angkor in an area known for iron mining.

Both sites posed enormous challenges to the determined photographer because

of their locations in much less accessible areas. In addition, the work had to be carried out with serious time constraints, making the shooting chaotic, according to the photographer. Trees and branches had to be removed from faces before they could be photographed and the best angles for shooting pictures were often on top of wobbling piles of stone. Banteay Chmar, which has not been restored, remains one of Cambodia's most extensive ruins.

Undaunted by such challenges, Saito was able successfully to complete the project. He photographed 31 new faces and documented the existence of others which have fallen to ruin. His efforts culminated in *The Face Towers of Banteay Chmar*, a valuable work documenting an important aspect of the reign of the late twelfth century Khmer ruler Jayavarman VII, whose face is believed to have served as the inspiration for the large stone images. The book, which is in both English and Japanese, is divided into two main sections. The first part consists of one hundred pages of photographs in both color and black and white. This is followed by a chapter written by Olivier Cunin, based on research he carried out at the Institut National Polytechnique, Lorraine, France, for a Ph.D. thesis demonstrating that there are additional face towers at Bayon which are today in ruin.

The book's photographic section commences with color photographs of Banteay Chmar, its adjacent satellite temples and Mebon and also includes color photos of Preah Khan of Kom-

pong Svay. Captions tend to be poetic, such as, "Pediment bathed in sunlight / Banteay Chmar (entrance of the main temple)". This section is followed by black and white photos of all the faces found at each site with precise information about each one's location.

The second part of the book presents an extremely detailed 40-page text by Cunin. The chapter starts with a comprehensive list of sources for scholars who have visited and written about the monument in the past. As the author points out, up until the 1920s these faces were originally mistaken as representing one of the Hindu gods, possibly Brahma or Siva, due to the mistaken classification of the Bayon period to a much earlier era. Only in 1924, when a carving of the *Avalokitesvara* was discovered at the Bayon, was the monument correctly linked to a later date and Mahayana Buddhism.

Unfortunately, as the author also points out, due to its remote location, Banteay Chmar has suffered from extensive pillaging. Cunin mentions that in 1999 Thai border police found a large section of the western gallery, which was being smuggled into Thailand. Those in Thailand at the time remember that the large gallery section with an image of the *Avalokitesvara* was placed on display at the National Museum in Bangkok before it was returned to Cambodia, where the pieces are now kept at the museum in Phnom Penh.

Cunin's text is supported with maps, plans, photographs and detailed drawings which include comparisons with

other architectural sites in Cambodia which have monumental faces. Under the section "Where Are the Face Towers Found", the author briefly refers to Preah Khan of Kompong Svay. The section also includes an inventory of face towers which are in ruin. This is accompanied by a series of black and white photographs, where stone sections believed to be part of the face tower are highlighted in color.

Any serious visitor to Banteay Chmar, "the citadel of the cats" as the impressive Khmer ruins are called, would find reading this book extremely useful in serving to explain the layout and design of the almost overwhelming fields of stone rubble. Members of a recent Siam Society trip can attest to the fact that reaching the site is still a difficult journey over bumpy roads and touring the monument requires prowess at climbing over mounds of uneven stone. How Saito in a short time managed to photograph all the faces and accurately remember where each image is located in the maze of stone rubble is difficult to imagine.

However impressive Saito's efforts, *The Face Towers of Banteay Chmar* does have certain limitations. One main drawback is the fact that the book is written in two languages and certain sections, such as "For the Catalogue" and the "Editorial Notes", are poorly translated into English. Book distributors tend to avoid multi-language books for reasons which are apparent in this book. As the present reviewer does not know Japanese, no comments can be made as

to the quality of the translation of Olivier Cunin's text. Another problem concerning the book is the inclusion of photographs of the face towers of Preah Khan of Kompong Svay without the provision of a separate text and explanation about this monument. The explanatory text written by Olivier Cunin only covers Banteay Chmar. While Preah Kahn is mentioned in passing in Cunin's text, the book would be more balanced if a short separate section about this monument had also been included.

Despite the problems mentioned above, anyone wishing to visit Banteay Chmar would find in this volume extremely useful introduction to this little-known site. The many diagrams and drawings which accompany Cunin's text help to make sense of a complex archaeological site. Baku Saito's attempt to document the challenging archaeological sites of both Banteay Chmar and Preah Khan of Kompong Svay is admirable, and is well complemented by Olivier Cunin's precise text. Any visit to these two remote Khmer sites would be enhanced by a thorough study of this book.

Jane Puranananda

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Zhou Dagan, *A Record of Cambodia, the Land and its People*, translated with an introduction and notes by Peter Harris, foreword by David Chandler. Chiang Mai, Silksworm Books, 2007, xv + 150 pp.

For anyone with more than a passing interest in the great Cambodian empire centred on Angkor, the name of Zhou Dagan is immediately familiar, though for some of a certain age, including the present reviewer, there is still a tendency to think of this obscure but immensely important observer of Angkor in the thirteenth century by the pre-*pinyin* rendering of his name as Chou Ta-kuan. His importance stems, of course, through the fact of his being the only eyewitness chronicler of the city of Angkor and its inhabitants while it was still a major, if fading, power in mainland Southeast Asia.

Until quite recently, it is a fair assumption that most Anglophone readers will have encountered Zhou Dagan in the translation from French of Paul Pelliot by J. Gilman d'Arcy Paul, first published by the Siam Society in 1967. And, since 2001, these same Anglophone readers have had the opportunity to consult a more up-to-date and elegant rendering of the French by this journal's editor, Michael Smithies, published again by the Siam Society. Few readers, whether Anglophone or Francophone, will have gained access to Zhou Dagan by returning to the French translation of this work by Paul Pelliot, published in 1902, let alone the first translation from

Chinese into French accomplished by Jean-Pierre-Abel Rémusat in 1819.

Now, for the first time in over fifty years, Peter Harris has provided us with a translation of Zhou's text, working directly from Chinese into English. And he has done so with a very detailed accompanying scholarly apparatus that places Zhou Dagan in his place and time, while explaining his reasons for varying his translation from those offered by his predecessors working from French into English. One point to which the translator gives particular emphasis is the fact that Zhou Dagan's 'record', as we have it, is only part of the document he prepared after spending a little less than a year in Cambodia in 1296–97.

For those not schooled in a deep knowledge of Chinese history, what Harris has to say about Zhou's background makes for fascinating reading. As Harris says in his introduction, after establishing that Zhou was born near the Chinese port city of Wenzhou in south-eastern China, this 'is not a place many people outside China have heard of', but its character as a dynamic and open location, peopled by individuals with a 'strong sense of identity . . . pleasure seekers and bon vivants', gives clues to the sort of person Zhou would have been. And it is indeed possible to see in reading Zhou's account of Angkor that he was, as Harris suggests, a man appreciative of good living and able to enjoy what he sees. Yet this *débrouillard* view of the world went hand in hand with a degree of prudishness which some-

times intrudes on his account of sexual practices, most of which he reports on hearsay rather than through personal observation.

To what extent does this new translation overtake those previously available? I would suggest that this is a question that can be answered in two ways. At one level the existence of Harris's version certainly does not mean we should cast previous French into English versions into the outer darkness. A non-specialist reading Paul or Smithies will still come away with a broadly satisfactory understanding of what Zhou Dagan had to say, with the essentials of his account well and truly available. Indeed, at first glance, this new translation appears like a paraphrase of earlier versions of Zhou's text. Take, for instance, the 'chapter' headed 'Agriculture' in the Paul translation and 'Cultivating the Land' in Harris. The first sentence of this section in Paul reads:

Generally speaking, three or four crops a year can be counted, for the entire Cambodian year resembles the fifth and sixth moons of China, and frost and snow are unknown.

Whereas in Harris it is:

In general crops can be harvested three or four times a year, the reason being that all four seasons are like our fifth and sixth months, with days that know no frost or snow.

On other occasions there are rather more than minor differences in the

rendering provided by Harris. Consider as an example the section dealing with ‘Villages’. In Paul’s version it reads:

Each village has its temple, or at least a pagoda. No matter how small the village may be, it has a local mandarin, called the *mai-chieh*. Along the highways there are resting places like our post halts; these are called *sen-mu* (*Khmer, samnak*). Only recently, during the war with Siam, whole villages have been laid waste.

The Harris rendering of this passage is:

In every village there is a Buddhist temple or pagoda. Where the population is quite dense there is normally an official called *mai-jie* who is responsible for the security of the village. Resting places called *senmu*, like our posting-houses, are normally found along the main roads

As the result of repeated wars with the Siamese the land has been completely laid to waste.

In the lengthy footnote (99) that relates to this passage Harris explains his reasons for doubting that it can be read to suggest Buddhism was by this time ‘paramount in villages’; he expands the role assigned to the *mai-jie*, pointing out that it may be a Chinese rendering of the Khmer for a village headman, *mai s’rok*; and his translation, with ‘wars’ in the plural contrasts with the singular reference to conflict in Paul. This, as another reviewer, Chris Baker, has suggested, raises unanswerable questions about the extent to which conflict between Angkor and the rising Siamese states to the west was already a feature in the fourteenth century.

So, and at a second level, for anyone concerned with the minutiae of translation, the detail of flora and fauna, and the contested nuances in undertaking a translation from the original Chinese text, Harris deserves high praise. His explanations are admirably detailed and informed by references to Chinese historical texts, the abundant French literature on Angkor, and the linguistic work of Michael Vickery and the late Judith Jacobs.

The book is helpfully illustrated with twenty-six photographs chosen to focus on issues raised in the text.

The author and Silkworm Books are to be congratulated for making this important new contribution to Angkorian scholarship available to a wide audience.

Milton Osborne

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*Okna Veang Thiounn, Voyage du roi Sisowath en France.* Translated from Khmer by Olivier de Bernon. Paris, Mercure de France, 2006, xx + 267 pp.

On 7 May 1906, the sociable 66-year-old Cambodian monarch, Sisowath (r. 1904–1927), embarked on a three-month-long journey to France. The voyage was dutifully recorded in Khmer by his Palace Minister, *okna Veang Thiounn* (c. 1860–1944).

Thiounn's text was never published in his lifetime, but to commemorate the centenary of the occasion, it was recently printed in Khmer in full. Olivier de Bernon's deft and accessible translation into French brings this charming, *belle époque* account to the attention of twenty-first century readers.

In 1906, France was 'at the apogee of its power', as de Bernon writes, and Cambodia was a jewel in its imperial crown. King Sisowath, unlike his older brother Norodom (r. 1863–1904), was justifiably regarded as a friend as well as a protégé of France. The overriding purpose of his visit was to display France to the King of Cambodia and the King of Cambodia to France. Judging from Thiounn's account and others published at the time, the visit as an exercise in public relations was an unqualified success.

The appeal of *Voyage en France* stems from the zest and thoroughness of Thiounn's account, especially whenever it frees itself from its dutiful format to display Thiounn's excitement, shared

by the monarch and his wide-eyed entourage, as they encountered a pleasing, tumultuous, hospitable and almost entirely different world.

Thiounn punctiliously reports every stage of the long sea-voyage, starting with a visit to Saigon, which 'had been conquered by the French' (p. 42) and where the King had a tooth removed. Stops and ceremonies followed in Singapore, Ceylon and Port Said before the Cambodians, arriving in France, were greeted (p.105) by 'the entire population' of Marseilles: 'People said that they had never heard or seen anything like it. They had never seen the French people so enthusiastically welcome a monarch from anywhere in the world.'

Soon afterwards, Thiounn lists dozens of hotels, shops and banks in Marseilles – the names presumably taken down from innumerable *cartes de visite*. De Bernon heroically attempts to decode the Khmer transcriptions of these names, which appear *en bloc* and remind us that *Voyage en France* records the surfaces of everything seen, met and experienced by Sisowath and his entourage. Significant and apparently meaningless events receive the same deadpan, fastidious treatment. The costumes that the king wore and the routes he travelled, for example, are set down in as much detail as what he said when he called on the President of the French Republic. Everything that Sisowath did in the eyes of the Khmer, after all, was of sublime importance, and was recorded in a vocabulary reserved specifically for those with royal blood.

Sisowath's *corps de ballet* performed in Marseilles at the Colonial Exhibition. It was its first appearance outside the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh. The evening was a great success, and Thiounn tells us (p. 134) that the king, arriving at the theatre in his 'glittering, multi-colored clothing was as beautiful as a god descending into the world of men.' In his introduction, however, de Bernon points out that this public performance aimed at strangers cleared the way, as time went on, for a gradual 'modernization' and cheapening of a sacred artistic genre.

From Marseilles, the Cambodians travelled to Paris, where the crowds were consistently 'delirious' (p. 177). Their seventeen-day visit was crowded with presentations, formal visits and celebrations.

When Sisowath called on Armand Fallières, a perhaps forgettable President of the Republic (p. 162), he expressed his gratitude to France for helping Cambodia to flourish, adding that he considered France to be 'like a mother and a father' to his country. M. Fallières responded graciously by repeating the king's remarks, without the parenthetical clause.

Officially, Sisowath visited a range of ministries, high-ranking figures and institutions. He absorbed everything courteously and with pleasure. His ceremonial schedule was lightened by shopping excursions, visits to Fontainebleau, two nights at a circus and one at the Opera (*Samson and Delilah*), as well as an afternoon at the races (pp. 88–90), where

he lost one bet, won another, and was loudly cheered by the crowd. At the end of the day, he presented a carved silver box to one of the winning jockeys.

In Paris shortly before going home, Sisowath sponsored an hour-long performance by the royal ballet at a 'garden party' given in his honor for 30,000 people at the Elysée Palace (pp. 208–210).

The Cambodians then spent three days in Nancy and eight more in Paris, before departing for Marseilles and their voyage home on 18 July. Unfortunately, Thiounn's account breaks off inexplicably on 6 July, when the king arrived in Nancy, although we know from other sources that the rest of the visit was as crowded and as happy as the days that had gone before.

*Voyage en France* celebrates a signal moment in what Alain Forest has called the 'painless colonization' of Cambodia. Forest's optimistic assessment has been astutely called into question by Penny Edwards and others, but the fact remains that the survival of Cambodia as a quasi-sovereign state in the nineteenth century owes much to France. The enduring Francophilia of the Cambodian royal family and older members of the elite is genuine, a generally positive legacy of the colonial era. In the 'blame game' that occupies so much writing about contemporary Cambodia, France has less to answer for, we would argue, than many other powers, including the United States, China, and Cambodia's larger neighbors. With these ideas in mind, and for friends of Cambodia *tout court* and

for *la belle époque*, this delightful book can be read with pleasure, without being taken, as the visit certainly was not, too seriously.

David Chandler

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*Views of Seventeenth-Century Vietnam: Christoforo Borri on Cochinchina and Samuel Barron on Tonkin*, introduced and annotated by Olga Dror and K.W. Taylor. Ithaca, NY, Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2006, 290 pp. \$23.95 (paper), \$46.95 (cloth).

One of the standard laments by historians and teachers of early modern Vietnamese history is the relative paucity of primary source materials that can take us beyond the often frustratingly terse style of the various court chronicles. These chronicles tend to emphasize events at the court, descriptions of military conflicts, social upheaval, and other affairs of state. They rarely offer any glimpses into the more mundane aspects of Vietnamese lives, or even much detail regarding life in the capitals themselves. Beginning in the seventeenth century, as increasing numbers of Europeans made their way to the shores of Dai Viet, we begin to have travelers' accounts that offer eyewitness descriptions of some of these sociological details. While often confused in the details and betraying some lack of comprehension of certain elements of Vietnamese society or culture, these accounts are invaluable complements to Vietnamese official court histories.

The volume under review here, *Views of Seventeenth-Century Vietnam: Christoforo Borri on Cochinchina and Samuel Barron on Tonkin*, makes two of the earliest and best-known European accounts of Dai Viet available to a wider audience. This volume

includes the texts of complementary and largely contemporaneous accounts by European residents in the northern and southern Vietnamese courts in the seventeenth century. As such, they are a natural pairing, enabling the reader to compare the situations in the northern Trinh and southern Nguyen realms at this time. Christoforo Borri's account is based on his five years of residence in the southern realm between 1617 and 1622, just prior to the outbreak of the protracted civil war between the Trinh and Nguyen (1627–1672). Samuel Barron's report is based primarily on his residence in Thang Long in the late 1670s and early 1680s, though he had been born in Tonkin, and lived there for some time as a boy. Thus, each represents the insights of a man who had spent substantial amounts of time living in the Vietnamese realms, making them particularly valuable. Barron, who was fluent in Vietnamese, was perhaps the more thorough informant, though Borri's account is also an indispensable source for this period.

This republication of the two accounts is substantially enhanced by the lengthy introduction to the texts, written by Olga Dror for the text by Borri, and Keith Taylor for Barron's account. Furthermore, the editors have richly annotated the texts themselves, offering clarification and commentary on some of the more obscure elements of the texts, particularly the transliterations of certain Vietnamese terms. I was also very pleased that the volume includes twelve illustrations, which were contained in

the original Barron account. These very early images depicting elements of life in the northern capital of Thang Long are invaluable for representing such things as a marriage procession, the civil service examination compound, the courts of the Emperor and the Lord, and military and naval exercises.

Of the two prefatory essays, Dror's is the lengthier and more detailed, offering a substantial survey of Borri's life, peregrinations, scientific inquiries, and the problems he encountered with the Jesuit hierarchy for his scientific views. His sojourn in Cochinchina was only a short part of his life, most of which was spent in Europe moving between Portugal, Italy, and Spain. Although quite intriguing as an account of this complicated man and the difficulties he encountered over the course of his career, Dror's lengthy essay strays well beyond the circumstances of Borri's description of Cochinchina. While it offers some very useful background to the text and its creation, I found the detailed information about Borri somewhat extraneous. Her essay concludes with an exploration of the recently published, selective translation of Borri's work into Vietnamese, which offers very useful insights into the ways in which Vietnamese scholars continue to amend or expurgate historical sources to protect nationalist sensibilities. Taylor's account of Barron's life is much briefer, ten pages versus Dror's fifty for Borri, necessitated by the sketchier material available on Barron. On the other hand, it does offer sufficient context

for understanding Barron's illuminating insights regarding the nature of society and politics in Tonkin. Moreover, it usefully situates Barron's account as being in part a response to Jean-Baptiste Tavernier's 1680 description of Tonkin, which was based on secondary materials and apparently riddled with errors. Overall, the presentation of this supplementary material is very well done, though I lament the absence of an index, and would have preferred more professionally drawn maps than those included here.

What about the contents of these accounts themselves? Borri's account is valuable on numerous fronts. He offers a brief description of a wide range of aspects of Cochinchinese society and culture. He describes local produce, common elements of diet and drink, and dress — largely in silks. The work includes explanations of local habits and practices (such as marriage rituals), and the roles of scholars and physicians in society. Borri provides an account of the role and training of elephants and offers a description of the rhinoceros. He talks about education, government structures, and the Nguyen arts of war. He describes language, climate, and trade. In short, Borri offers brief snapshots of many significant elements of Nguyen material life. He also addresses their spiritual lives, for, being a Jesuit priest, Borri was particularly concerned with such issues. His account of Vietnamese religious practices offers a rather confused depiction of Buddhism and Daoism, as Dror points out in her preface, intermin-

gling the two belief systems in ways that extended well beyond the existing Vietnamese syncretism of the two. Not surprisingly, the description of religious beliefs and practices is very much set in the context of the Christian mission and its attempts at gaining converts. Thus, the lens Borri uses substantially skews his depiction of religious practices. Nonetheless, it is useful when read with the cautions provided by the annotations.

Samuel Barron was the son of an English trader and a Vietnamese woman, and apparently lived for some years in affiliation with the English factory outside of Thang Long. His account reflects an informed knowledge of significant elements of early seventeenth century Vietnamese society. Fortunately for us, it parallels Borri's account in numerous aspects, similarly examining trade, local produce, geography, habits, medical practices, and the status of scholars and education. He provides a more detailed account of the political structures in the north than Borri did for the Nguyen realm describing the nature of the divided rule between the Trinh lords and the largely ceremonial Le Emperors. He gives particular attention to numerous state rituals, including the annual "heaven and earth" sacrifice, which was overseen by the Emperor, and also imperial funerals and their elaborate processions. His account concludes with a brief survey of religious beliefs, which diverges from Borri's in that it makes virtually no reference to Christianity or to the Catholic missions, only offer-

ing a confused account of the alleged early Chinese exposure to Christianity. Mostly, it consists of basic descriptions of the two chief 'sects' he sees in Tonkin, namely, Confucianism and Buddhism.

In sum, this volume is a very welcome contribution to the study and teaching of early modern Vietnamese history. While many historians of Vietnam are acquainted with these two accounts at second hand, I would guess that few have read them in their entirety, an opportunity that now presents itself. Furthermore, these are welcome in the classroom as well, for they offer readily accessible texts that enable students to gain insights into some of the more ordinary aspects of seventeenth century Vietnamese life. The editors are to be greatly commended for combining these texts and through their context-setting prefaces and annotations bringing them to life for a new audience.

George Dutton

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Virginia Morris with Clive A. Hills, *A History of the Ho Chi Minh Trail: The Road to Freedom*. Bangkok, Orchid Press, 2006, 180 pp., ills.

The book is the outcome of the author's year-long journey along the tortuous Ho Chi Minh Trail, which runs through Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, although she spent much of her time travelling in Laos. It is a well-balanced travelogue intertwined with history and weaves a clever dialogue between the past and the present. One of the main purposes of the book is to give Laos a place in the history of the Vietnam War, or, as the author rightly refers to it, the Indochina War, because 'Laos was written out of its history' (p.26).

The history of the Ho Chi Minh or Truong Son Trail dates back to 1959. The violation of the 1954 Geneva Accord by the United States of America and the South Vietnamese regime by the failure to hold a general election in Vietnam in July 1956 led North Vietnam in 1959 to reinstate Resolution 15, which revived the revolutionary war to unify the North with the South (p.6). This marked the beginning of the history of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which, until the end of the Vietnam War, was known among the North Vietnamese as the Truong Son Trail or Duong 559 (p.11).

In May 1959, the Special Military Action Group, or the 559<sup>th</sup> Transportation Unit, was formed, with the responsibility to build the road which would transport men and military supplies to

the battlefield in the south. Initially, the route was to be confined to just inside the border of Vietnam, but to avoid the problems of infiltrating the DMZ, it was decided that the route would be built down the western side of the Truong Son mountains in Laos. In the mid-1960s, Lieutenant General Dong Si Nguyen was appointed the commander of the 559<sup>th</sup> Unit and it was under his command and leadership that the successful construction and expansion of the Trail took place.

The Trail in Laos covered the larger part of southern Laos. The American air raids and the heavy bombing towards the end of the 1960s on the Trail in Laos pressured Hanoi to build more roads in Laos. This was to avoid the risk of one main supply route being completely blocked, as the leadership in Hanoi decided that 'never again would there be only one main road' and the 559<sup>th</sup> Corps set about opening multiple bypasses in vulnerable locations' (p.39). The Trail's penetration into this already politically destabilised kingdom in the 1960s did not work in its favour. It further divided the locals between those who supported the Pathet Lao communists, the Neutralists and the Royalists. Together with their bitter memories of the colonial period and the American and other Western involvements during the Vietnam War, it is not surprising to find that in many places in Laos where the author and her companions visited, their presence was met with mistrust among the Lao and roused painful memories. This chapter of Lao history and the Vietnam

War is well described:

...Scars were not just physical but mental, and families were torn between love and politics. We were just the reminder of a string of broken promises from all sides.... (p.42)

Her 'epic journey' on the Trail, which led her to travel hundreds of kilometres by various forms of transport through lower Laos, reveals two striking features; i.e., the suffering this small country and its people had to endure during the war and after and its fantastic ethnic diversity. As for the suffering, the author's passage through many villages in order to find the Trail and to see war equipment damaged during battles reveals some of the ugly features of the Vietnam War. Since a major proportion of the Trail ran through Laos, it was heavily targeted by American air raids.

She also reminds us of the damage the war has caused to human beings. The chemical warfare – especially the use Agent Orange or dioxin – caused serious damage, both to humans and to the environment. When Virginia Morris and her team arrived at Ban Lang Khang, they found that the trees there were small because the area had been chemically sprayed and even today women give birth to malformed children and their livestock die (p.37). There is no need to mention the Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) that still kills local people when they farm their land, which will take many years to clear entirely.

Even though her journey reminds us of the pain and suffering the war caused,

there are also pleasurable moments when she touches upon other subjects. Her visits to the villages of many ethnic inhabitants add interesting aspects to the book. This is due to the fact that 'Truong Son boasts an array of linguistic groups, all of which practise their own political and cultural beliefs...' (p.70). Her experiences of cultural variations and differences practised by many different ethnic groups in Laos, such as black magic, animism and supernaturalism, logically led her to conclude that 'I had ceased to resist any seemingly illogical actions. The more at peace I was with them the greater my ability became to identify other cultural phenomena' (p.74).

As the title of the book suggests, it is not just an account of the negative aspects of the Vietnam War. On the contrary, it glorifies the role the Trail played in this chapter of Vietnamese history. Many chapters describe the great achievement the Ho Chi Minh Trail represented and the successes it brought to North Vietnam, culminating in the freedom and unification of the country. Chapter by chapter, the author takes readers back into the history of Vietnam and the Vietnam War from the 1950s. The successful story of the painstaking effort by Hanoi to build the Trail against all odds, as retold to the author by Nguyen Si Dong and other military leaders involved in the Trail project, enables readers to understand clearly why Hanoi won the battle. The North Vietnamese effort to build the Trail demonstrates how this project drew together so many sectors of Vietnamese

society – the army, the youth, students and women, to name but a few – each of whom took responsibility for a particular aspect. Neither the heavy American air raids in Laos or in North Vietnam nor the severe natural environment could deter the determination to build the roads to reach South Vietnam.

One of the most outstanding achievements of the Trail was the building of a pipeline to supply fuel from the North to the South. By 1968, there was a chronic shortage of fuel in the South and 'if the fuel did not go south, nothing else would' (p.99). Brigadier-General (present rank) Phan Tu Quang and Brigadier-General (present rank) Mai Trong Phuoc were given the command to oversee the fuel pipeline project. It was indeed a very daunting task because:

...Apart from the lack of skilled workers, the pipeline had to be carried to position piece by piece, and much of the line had to be hung from trees, laid along mountainsides or buried in shallow trenches. The most pressing affair was that the Soviets did not agree with the project and refused to supply large quantities of pipeline or send experts to advise, on the grounds that it would fail... (p.99)

Against all odds, the pipeline project materialised and 'it had taken the Trail into a new era. They had minimised losses of fuel and human lives, and there was no need to transport bulk fuel by road' (p.99).

Did the Americans know what was going along the Trail, given that they possessed advanced reconnaissance

technology? They surely did, but the question was how effective they were in responding to their enemy's activities.

After the Paris agreement was signed on 27 January 1973 and the American air raids came to an end, the military leadership in Hanoi increased its activities to reach the South. The Truong Son Trail officially became known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail and played a vital part to allow the mobile army from the North to reach the South at, as General Vo Nguyen Giap put it, 'lightning speed' (p.135). Only two years after the Paris agreement was signed, Saigon and the southern regime fell into the hands of Hanoi on 30 April 1975. The Vietnam War eventually came to an end and for Hanoi, the Ho Chi Minh Trail had fulfilled its duty as the 'road to freedom'. However, in the author's opinion, the strategic and logical importance of the Trail has not been recognised, and has even been played down by the West.

We certainly cannot ignore the importance and the achievements of the Trail, but the question is whether the freedom and the victory the Trail brought about is for everybody? Tourists now can enjoy some scenic routes of the Trail which were troubled areas in the past and certainly involved trouble for many people involved. The author poignantly observes that:

...We had heard stories, met people and seen the routes, but how much did I really know?...I wondered how many locals had truly contributed their 'eyes and ears' to the People's War, as in Vietnam; how many were mere bystanders;

how many had been French or American supporters? And of those who had, how many were still doing so today? I got the feeling that some locals were pleased to see us and wanted to speak, whereas others I suspected even lied to Mr. Vong [the author's guide in Laos], reluctant to discuss these matters with foreigners! For them, 'The Trail' was still secret and politically their lips were sealed. So sadly these questions might never be answered as this important part of history dies out with the individual. (p.127)

Unlike the tortuous Trail itself, the book is written in a concise and straightforward style and gives readers a multifaceted viewpoint, embracing history, politics, anthropology and a travel diary. The main feature of the book — covering an aspect of the complicated history of the Vietnam War — makes reading it both pleasurable and thought-provoking.

Sud Chonchirdsin

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Elizabeth H. Moore, *Early Landscapes of Myanmar*. Bangkok, River Books, 2007, 271 pp., ill.

Isolated for decades, Burma (Myanmar) was a virtual *terra incognita* until the country slowly opened to foreign investigators, beginning largely in the early 1990s. This new openness, coupled with spurts of energy on the part of the Department of Archaeology, has meant that the nation's early archaeological record is finally coming out of the shadows. Scores of articles by Burmese and foreign scholars since the early 1990s have broadened our horizons considerably, notably an entire issue of *Asian Perspectives* (40/1, 2001) devoted to Burma in 2001, followed by an updated overview in 2006 by Bob Hudson and Pamela Gutman ("The Archaeology of Burma [Myanmar] from the Neolithic to Pagan" in *Southeast Asia: From pre-history to history*, London, 2006). Elizabeth Moore's *Early Landscapes* is, however, the first comprehensive survey to appear between the covers of one book, replete with over a hundred color illustrations, numerous maps, line drawings and an extensive bibliography. Moreover, much of the material has never been illustrated or has been tucked away in poorly distributed reports published in Burma. The bulk of the photographs were taken by the author during decades of field research, studying first-hand the principal sites and public and private collections.

The ambitious scope of the work is a summary of the major archaeological

sites and key trends, beginning with hunters-and-gatherers and concluding in ca. 900 A.D., when Pagan is thought to have become inhabited by Burmans. The Introduction is a synopsis of the subsequent chapters, together with a useful survey of the development of archaeology in Burma, beginning with the British and taking the story up to the present, including the important role of aerial photography. The first four chapters are devoted to the early pre-historic material, presenting for example the Neolithic presence of polished stone tools throughout much of the country. Included here are also some of the possible megalithic sites of Upper Burma. The Pyu and Mon are treated in a lengthy penultimate chapter, while the last chapter is a summation.

Many sites the author has covered in her articles over the years, but this handy volume unites this material in a continuous narrative. Indeed, the fresh discoveries in the Upper Chindwin in Upper Burma, the Samon valley south of Mandalay, and along the Sittaung, Salween (Thanlwin) and Tavoy (Dawei) rivers have expanded our vision of early Myanmar immeasurably. Also, the immense scale of Burma's early walled cities is conveyed by a handful of war-time aerial photographs drawn from the Williams-Hunt Collection at SOAS.

The Samon region has yielded an astonishing number of Bronze-Iron Age findings over the last three decades, much, unfortunately, the product of looting. Especially impressive is a wide assortment of beads, such as carnelian, with affinities to Pyu ornaments and

what is also found in Lower Burma. The Samon valley appears to have connections to the Yunnan bronze cultures of the Dian, a focus the author sees as shifting to South Asia with the rise of Buddhist kingdoms and the earliest inscriptions.

For the historic period the most exciting new finds are those near Tavoy, from Thagara, where excavations in 2001 revealed brick structures and remarkable sandstone figures with connections to Indian sculpture, Pagan, and to other Southeast Asian cultures. Equally important are previously unpublished remains from the Buddhist monasteries excavated at Winka, an early Buddhist site near Thaton. Excavated over twenty years ago by U Myint Aung, none of the most impressive finds had been illustrated until the appearance of this publication. A large terracotta plaque in the Moulmein (Mawlamyine) Museum from Winka features two rampant lions disposed in a fashion reminiscent of lions depicted in relief on the laterite wall ('Hsindat-Myindat') in Zothoke. Even stronger parallels exist with the famous terracotta roundels from Kyontu, only 25 km northeast of Pegu (Bago), suggesting a homogenous cultural zone uniting a major swatch of Burma's coastline, that is, from the Thaton region to Pegu. For decades the Kyontu terracottas appeared in a vacuum, unrelated to anything, but these finds near Pegu can now be tied to developments much further down the coast. In a broader context some of the discoveries from Winka share an affinity to stone work from Dvaravati Mon sites in Thailand,

notably a motif depicting alternating lozenges-and-circles. Also, at least one type of votive tablet at Winka relates to a common type found in Thailand. That this important material was excavated so long ago and has only now come out indicates the extent to which the archaeological record in Burma is so poorly known. Other new riches include three standing Buddha bronzes found south of Twante, across the Rangoon (Yangon) River from Rangoon, discovered accidentally by a farmer in 2005. The three relate to other bronzes in the area and to one discovered long ago from the Thaton area. This material and much more rounds out our picture of Lower Burma, especially the Delta and the lower peninsula bordering Thailand. Indeed, the material from Lower Burma in this new book irrevocably redresses the previous focus on the Pyu sites in central and Upper Burma.

Burma has been blessed with a rich tradition of chronicles, beginning in earnest in the sixteenth century. The chronicles touch on major pre-historic sites, such as Sri Ksetra, Tagaung Beikthano, but their direct bearing on events in the first millennium has yet to be established. The shortcomings of later chronicles and Chinese sources are noted in the introduction, but this later body of indigenous history continues to muddle our understanding of Burma's past. Indeed, these diverse chronicles provide the matrix for the government's desire to confirm myths gleaned from these sources. The recent discovery of Pyu material at Tagaung and the rush to vindicate the chronicle accounts is

only one example. ("Such findings [from Tagaung] will also be able to rebut with evidence the scoffs at Myanma history books as though what was said in them were legendary.", *New Light of Myanmar*, March 9, 2004). The author, however, carefully sifts the hard archaeological evidence and the chronicles, but readers unfamiliar with the pitfalls of the chronicles may find the close juxtaposition of archaeological descriptions with the later myths a trifle confusing. Also, some of the information cited from the chronicles is perhaps given too much weight, such as the splitting of three groups upon the legendary demise of Tagaung, known in the chronicles (p. 236). On the other hand, this valuable legendary material will be of great interest, especially for those new to the subject.

The cornucopia of newly-published discoveries, skillfully woven together with more well-known material, makes this essential reading for those interested in the early history of Burma and mainland Southeast Asia. As such, it is a landmark that one hopes will encourage similar publications.

Donald M. Stadtner

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Wil O. Dijk, *Seventeenth-century Burma and the Dutch East India Company, 1634–1680*. Singapore, Singapore University Press, 2006, xvii + 348 pp., 12 maps (with appendices in CD-Rom).

In 1939 the renowned historian of South-East Asia, D. G. E. Hall, observed that the history of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Burma received almost no attention. That remained true for some 60 years, before Wil Dijk undertook her doctoral research at Leiden University on this subject. Although the research is based mainly on the records written by VOC employees, this book is not merely a history of trade between Europeans and Asians in the early modern period. As those familiar with these records can confirm, in order to trade effectively the VOC merchants also became perceptive of local politics and society. Besides writing an extensive history of the VOC-Burmese relations from 1634 to 1680, the author seeks to reconsider issues relating to Burmese economic history, Burmese political and military historiography, and the history of VOC's operations in Burma.

The book begins with the historical background of seventeenth-century Burma, which was stabilized and increasingly centralized under the rule of the Restored Toungoo Dynasty (1597–1752). The Company's men-on-the-spot had the opportunity to observe and report local conditions in Burma; these included natural resources, law, military capacity, the monetary system, the Buddhist religion and ethnic ten-

sions. As in many other places in early modern Asia where the political elite also governed economic activities, the VOC had to contact the Burmese royal court for permission to trade in the kingdom, which made the observance of the court protocol essential for the survival of the Dutch.

What attracted the Dutch Company to come and settle in Burma, or the 'Kingdom of Pegu' as the Dutch often called it, was that the kingdom offered the opportunity to trade with the Bay of Bengal and China. As the author puts it, the VOC's Burma trade was textile-based, which was part of the 'ancient inter-Asian sea-borne traffic between the Coromandel Coast and Burma across the Bay of Bengal' (p. 115). Impressive details of sailing conditions between the Bay and Burma are given here. There was a long list of rivals for the Dutch in this trade: the Portuguese, the Muslims ('Moors'), the English, the Danes, and the French. Also appealing to the VOC was Burma's commercial connection to China. But, like other foreigners, the Dutch were not allowed to access the Burmese-Yunnanese border, especially at the market town of Bhamo. They had to buy Chinese goods from the Burmese court and local merchants.

Economic history of early modern Burma has to be seen in a new light. VOC sources reveal that textile imports were cheap and meant for everyday use by common people, contrary to the earlier assumptions that they were luxuries intended for the elite. This and new statistics on wages paid to Burmese labourers indicate the fairly substantial

purchasing power of the indigenous people. Interestingly, the Company records also refer to the wages of its own employees operating in Burma and those of the Indian workers on the Coromandel Coast. The author's assumption that Burma's standard of living was considerably higher than that of contemporary Coromandel must still be counterchecked with other sources (p. 142–143).

VOC records confirm the condescending attitudes of the Burmese towards the Peguans as well as the animosity between Burma and Arakan. Contrary to the existing understanding, Dijk proves that the Burmese court did not procure arms from the Dutch and other foreigners, but took them away from these people, presumably for security reasons (p. 40).

The political history of Burma from 1649 to 1669 shows a precarious situation in which the kingdom's integrity was threatened by Chinese raiders, revolts in the south, and a regicide. However, basing her argument on VOC's increased shipping activities, the author suggests that these two decades were the 'golden years' of the Company trade in Burma. Importantly, she emphasizes that, despite difficulties and setbacks, VOC's Burma trade was profitable throughout (p. 196).

The greatest strength of this book is the author's ability to make utmost use of her chosen sources. It is misleading to think that the VOC, thus the Dutch, archives are the prerogative of the historians of Indonesia. More and more research into the histories of other Asian

countries based on these sources has appeared and will come to light. Dijk's study offers a lot of unique new data on both Burma and the VOC. As the author states herself, the detailed nature of the business data allows a precise evaluation of volume of trade and profit and loss of VOC's Burma trade. Readers will benefit from both the clear structure of the analysis and the extreme details of commercial data recorded by the Company, presented as appendices in the attached CD-Rom. The data includes, among other things, Dutch imports into and exports from Burma, a listing of VOC ships plying the Burma trade, the exchange of gifts between the Company and the Burmese court, a glossary of Indian textiles for the Burmese market, textile prices in Burma and India, and the wages of the VOC employees, the Burmese, and the Indians.

As mentioned before, Dijk manages to prove that Burmese trade was flourishing despite the turbulences in the mid-century. However, I wish the author had explained more how Burma succeeded in maintaining its position, or how the Burmese court coordinated its commercial activities in the time of troubles. Dijk explains that the VOC decided to leave Burma in 1680 because of the many unfavourable conditions in the Kingdom, such as restrictions on the export of Burmese goods and the prohibition of access to Bhamo, as much as difficulties within the Company, including its financial troubles, the effect of wars in Europe, and turmoil within the Dutch Republic. But most of all, she ascribes the Company's withdrawal to

the fundamental shift in its commercial priorities, from the intra-Asian trade to direct trade between Asia and Europe, which reduced the Company's need for trade with Burma. These explanations are lucid and sensible, but not quite satisfactory. Besides suffering from similar circumstances of frustrating Thai rules and regulations and royal monopolies of goods, the VOC trade with neighbouring Ayutthaya was declining in the second half of the seventeenth century, or did not grow. Still, the Company stayed on almost until the fall of the Thai kingdom in 1767.

In sum, this book is a rewarding answer both to the personal connection of the author to Burma and to D. G. E. Hall's challenge to use Dutch sources to study Burmese history. The result of the study shows that although its political centre was set in the hinterland, early modern Burma was significantly part of the intra-Asian trade and maritime interactions, and that Europeans like those in the VOC were determined to make the most of its offerings. This book strengthens the image of Burma, which was, besides being a territorial power of mainland South-East Asia, a dynamic trading polity in Asia. It offers an insightful reading with a great deal of new information for not only economic historians of Burma and the VOC but also for those interested in historical interactions between Asia and Europe.

Bhawan Ruangsilp

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Ma Ma Lay, *Not out of Hate*, translated by Margaret Aung-Thwin. Chiang Mai, Silkorm Books, 2006, 216 pp.

When US-based Margaret Aung-Thwin first decided to translate the Burmese language novel *Monywei Mahu* into English, she was not able to locate a copy of the book. Anna Allott, a Burmese language teacher at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies, had to send her photocopied chapters from England. Their efforts resulted in an admirable outcome: *Monywei Mahu*, or *Not Out of Hate*, became the first Burmese novel to be translated into English outside of Burma. First published in 1991, this latest 2006 edition was released by Silkorm Books in Thailand and is still one of only a handful of novels translated from Burmese into English.

A helpful introduction by Allott places the novel in its literary and historical context. *Not Out of Hate* was written by Ma Ma Lay (1917–1982), a pen-name for a female Burmese journalist, short-story writer and novelist. The Burmese language edition of *Not Out of Hate*, published in 1955, was so popular that it ran to at least five editions. Composed before the era of oppressive government censorship in Burma and set in colonial times just before the outbreak of the Second World War, the novel is an honest and heartbreakingly grim portrayal of the dichotomy between British, or Western, values and the traditional Burmese way of life. The tensions are portrayed through the ill-fated love story of Way

Way, a young woman who lives in a small town in the rice-growing regions of Lower Burma.

The story opens with Way Way excitedly peeping at the next-door house, which is awaiting the imminent arrival of a new member of staff for a British trading firm based in Rangoon called Bullock Brothers. The furniture that has been moved into the house is so grand and the servants are so smartly dressed that everyone in the neighbourhood assumes the new arrival is a British man – a rarity in the town – and are surprised to find out that he is, in fact, Burmese.

U Saw Han, the new Burmese Bullock Brothers representative, may not be British but he is an incurable convert to all that is English. He wears a pith helmet and peppers his speech with English words: “Cheers,” he says, or “Cheerio”, “Sorry”, and “Good night”.

To begin with, Way Way is in awe of this new arrival and enamoured of his worldly manners. She becomes embarrassed by her family's small-town Burmese ways, ashamed of the teapot with its broken spout and the way coffee served by her aunt has been sloppily spilled into the saucers. Way Way goes so far as to reorganise the household eating arrangements, so that family members sit on chairs and eat off a dining table rather than sitting on mats spread over the kitchen floor. Her attempts to make the house look “sophisticated and Westernised” are met with scorn by her brother, who proclaims, “It's a white man's house!”

It is perhaps not surprising that Way Way is so impressionable. She leads an isolated life. Her mother abandoned the family to become a nun in faraway Sagaing, the holy centre of Buddhist learning in Upper Burma. Her siblings are both married and no longer live in the family home. While Way Way looks up to U Saw Han, he in turn is besotted by her innocence and malleability. But what begins with a young and simple girl's curiosity rapidly deteriorates after the family allows U Saw Han to marry Way Way.

Much of the tension in the couple's doomed relationship is tantalisingly played out over food. At the first meal in which Way Way and her family are invited to dine at U Saw Han's house, she frets over the use of cutlery (which she is not accustomed to, as Burmese traditionally eat with their hands):

“She...became worried all over again as to how to use the knives and forks set near each plate. She was thoroughly intimidated by the sight of things she had never seen before. She had occasionally eaten a chicken pilaf with a spoon and fork at a *danbawk* [Indian biryani] shop in Rangoon, but never had she seen such an array of cutlery as on U Saw Han's table. She was so frightened that she could hardly look at it.”

As it turns out, she performs quite well during the meal and is even able to take some pleasure in her first experience of English cuisine, admiring the composition of chicken, potatoes, green beans and red beets on her plate and reflecting that the taste is pleasantly

different.

But her pleasure is fleeting. When her ill father's tuberculosis worsens and he is moved to Rangoon for treatment, she becomes a captive in her husband's house, forced to abandon the familiar and comfortable Burmese traditions of her childhood. U Saw Han is considerably older than her and takes full control of her day-to-day existence. In his eyes, she is “a precious little doll” or “a delicate piece of porcelain” – something to be mollycoddled and moulded into his image of the ideal Westernised woman.

Way Way follows her husband's lead. She wears the clothes he recommends, even forsaking Burmese sandals for “lady shoes”, or closed-toe shoes, which she gleefully kicks off as soon as he leaves for work so that she can walk about the house “Burmese style, free and unhampered”.

It is always at the dining table that the couple's differences are exacerbated. In deference to her husband, Way Way quashes her desire for Burmese food. She eats the bland fare her husband favours and dutifully devours eggs and milk. Secretly, though, she longs for the pungent delicacies of their native cuisine: hot chilli peppers, raw garlic cloves and powdered dried shrimp. Though she occasionally sneaks over to her family home to feast on Burmese food, she fears that her husband will find out when he smells the garlic on her breath.

In one excruciating scene, U Saw Han unexpectedly visits Way Way's

family home and finds her eating with her brother. Way Way is literally caught red-handed as her fingers are smeared with curry sauce, “all sticky and gooey and delicious”. U Saw Han’s displeasure at his wife returning to the uncouth ways of her upbringing is extreme. It is as if he has stumbled upon an unspeakable crime and his controlled fury is almost sinister. A “cold chill” passes over Way Way when she sees her husband and her face turns ashen when she realises she has been discovered.

Events come to a dramatic head when Way Way receives a telegram from Rangoon saying that her father is dangerously ill. U Saw Han forbids her from going to pay her respects, afraid that his “little flower” will catch her father’s highly-contagious disease. Her father dies the next morning and a distraught Way Way leaves to attend his funeral, after which she escapes to her mother’s nunnery in Sagaing. Her brief moment of delirious freedom comes to an end when she learns she is pregnant and so returns to her husband. The fates, however, are against the union between these two disparate souls. Way Way loses the baby and is diagnosed with tuberculosis, the disease that killed her father. True to his Western ways, her husband nurses her with scientific rigour, which involves a gruelling regimen of daily injections. Unable to muster the strength to fight against his ministrations of milk and medicine, Way Way wastes away and succumbs to her illness.

*Not Out of Hate* is a compelling story that explores the dark, psychological

underbelly of colonialism. The searing tensions between the two sides are examined within the intimate confines of one Burmese family and a single relationship between a husband who aspires to being British and a wife who only knows how to be Burmese. Played out against the rising tide of Burmese nationalism and the chaos of the Japanese occupation of Burma in the Second World War, the narrative has a desperate inevitability. As Way Way’s brother revels in the advance of the Japanese army and the retreat of the British, her husband stubbornly clings to his Western lifestyle; their pantry is stocked with his favourite Western brands of whisky, cigarettes, soap, toothpaste, English tea biscuits and tinned butter. As a good Burmese wife, Way Way caters to her husband’s needs and tries to please him till the bitter end, forsaking traditional treatments for her illness that have been offered by her family and sticking with the failing scientific knowledge her husband adheres to. Yet she continues to dream of her old way of life – a way of life that has been forbidden by her husband and is no longer accessible to her.

Each day, U Saw Han makes Way Way take a walk around the garden for exercise. On one of her daily perambulations, the emaciated Way Way hears the cries of food vendors in the streets around her house. “*Mohsein baung!* Nice and hot!” cries one vendor. Way Way used to eat the steaming cake with her family over breakfast, and recalls how it was generously sprinkled with

freshly shredded coconut and ground sesame seeds. “*Kaunghynin baung!*” yells another vendor, conjuring up in Way Way’s head fond memories of her family eagerly helping themselves to handfuls of warm and sticky rice. Even just to listen to these cries seems like a crime and, though the restrictions enforced by U Saw Han are now impossible for Way Way to shirk off, it is only with a joyless sense of duty that she acquiesces: “Her mouth watered as she heard each vendor, and then she thought of the bread and butter awaiting her on the table in the house and her appetite left her.”

Emma Larkin

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Françoise Douaire-Marsaudon, Bernard Sellato, Chanthal Zheng, eds, *Dynamiques identitaires en Asie et dans le Pacifique. I. Enjeux sociaux, économiques et politiques. II. Pratiques symboliques en transition*. Aix-en-Provence, Publications de Université de Provence, 2006. Volume I, 240 pp., Volume II, 208 pp.

Twenty-four papers from an international symposium organized by the Maison Asie Pacifique and the Center for Asia Pacific Area Studies of the Academia Sinica Taiwan, convened at Marseille, 23–25 June 2005, are published here in two volumes. The authors are affiliated with five French institutes of higher education, as well as three from Taiwan. Seven contributions are translated versions, though the original titles are not given.

In Volume I contributions on sociological, economic, and political facets are presented, preceded by the editors’ introduction.

Under the title of ‘Des Ang-yi au Rotary. Sociétés, associations, fondations, clubs. Solidarité et linguistique chez les Chinois de Thaïlande’ [15–28], Jean Baffie highlights different modes of solidarity among Thailand’s Chinese communities. He distinguishes between secret societies, vernacular associations, patronymic groups, charitable associations, and prestigious clubs.

Lan-Shiang Huang traces the successive establishment of different groups of Chinese immigrants in one particular harbour settlement on the

coast of Annam. In his 'Établissement et transformation des villes chinoises outre-mer au Viêt-Nam : le cas de Hôi An' [29-41], he considers the different Chinese communities that evolved from the fifteenth century, resulting in the emergence of Hôi An as a major port and trade centre.

Reflecting most recent developments, findings of two research projects into extending the middle classes in Taiwan in the 1990s are presented by Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao under the title 'Favoriser les recherches sur la classe moyenne en Asie de l'Est et du Sud-Est: essai de programme' [43-49].

The rationale of an ethnic group native to the coast and offshore islets of Malaita Island, Solomon Islands, to retain its traditional mode of trading, complete with shell-money as their currency, was studied by Pei-Yi Guo in 'De la monnaie à la dynamique d'initiative; la monnaie de coquillage chez les Langalanga contemporain, Iles Salomon' [53-75]. The Langalanga associate ethnic identity with their currency and resist modernization.

Reasoning that something has been remiss in the study of prostitution, especially with regard to addressing male roles and vital issues of public health, Laurence Husson focused his research on the male clients. In his contribution titled 'Les clients locaux et les touristes sexuels en Asie du Sud-Est sont d'anonymes rois' [77-105], the author identifies the vast majority of clients as Asians, and analyzes this clientele

by age, profession, conduct during the transaction, self-expressed motivation, and pretensions.

The growing demand for one of the highest-priced non-timber forest products of Southeast Asia, swiftlets' ('birds') nests, triggered research conducted by Bernard Sellato and reported as 'Les Chinois mangent-ils vraiment ces nids d'hirondelles? Environnement, commerce, transformations sociales et ethnicité à Bornéo oriental (XVII<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècle)' [107-125]. This study highlights how the state infringed on the source of livelihood of a coastal tribe, how the shift to the formal market triggered the formation of social classes among the Dayak, and how this polarized a group of Punan, thus also adversely affecting people in the interior of Kalimantan.

The clash between modern marketing and traditional production, trade, exchange, and gift-giving determined by gender is the theme of a contribution titled 'Le marché et le travail: ambivalences et contradictions à Wallis (Polynésie Occidentale)' [127-147] by Paul van der Grijp. Disputes erupted out of lack of knowledge about the local mentality, conflicting vested interests, and the structure of the economy that cannot supply produce in the quantity and of the quality required for and by a formal, central market.

A case study on the interaction of foreign investor and domestic labour force is based on evidence of Taiwanese enterprises operating factories in Vietnam. Its author, Hong-Zen Wang, presents findings under the title of 'Analyse post-

coloniale de pratique de management des Taïwanais au Viêt-Nam' [149–167]. The entrepreneurs' managerial and commercial practices are guided by authoritarian principles, provoking resentment by the Vietnamese labourers.

The pros and cons of Taiwan's independence are discussed with regard to ethnic affiliation and social class in the contribution titled 'Ethnicité, classe et politique nationale à Taïwan' [171–195] by Mau-Kuei Chang. The author sheds light on this issue at the global, regional, and national levels. Emphasis is placed on history and cultural heritage, concerns which both unify and separate.

Mass violence is diagnosed as a pervasive, endemic phenomenon in Southeast Asia, owing to its history of murderous warfare between countries, ethnic groups, majority against minority, and belligerent Western colonialism. With reference to Northeast Asia, Jean-Louis Margolin identifies the mechanics of mass murder, and offers a typology of massacres in his contribution titled 'Statut de la violence de masse en Asie du Sud-Est' [197–213].

The People's Republic of China as an upcoming giant is, according to Laurent Gédéon, not only on an economic but also a diplomatic and military offensive. As stressed in his contribution titled 'Montée en puissance internationale de la Chine et géopolitique chinoise en mer de Chine méridionale' [215–222], its relations with neighbouring countries are strained by claims to maritime territory that could escalate to become a major geopolitical conflict.

Addressing the criticism of APEC, the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation, as not meeting expectations, David W. F. Huang analyzes the declarations of the leaders of its member countries and official documents, focused on the two guiding principles: trade as well as investment liberalization, and economic as well as technological development. His conclusion to 'Définir le cadre institutionnel de l'APEC: une étude préliminaire' [223–237], is that, though APEC is nothing but a forum, its members conduct themselves as if real institutional constraints were imposed upon them.

Volume II presents contributions on cases of migration, diffusion, acculturation, intervention, and reconciliation, and are summarized below, again preceded by the editors' introduction.

Ethno-archaeological evidence, upon which Jean-Michel Chazine chanced when joining speleologists on their explorations in the interior of East Kalimantan, leads him to formulate a provocative hypothesis, as reported in 'Des Tuamotu à Bornéo ou "le long périple des Océaniens" revisité' [17–24], and throws doubts on existing theories concerning the origins of Austronesians and Pre-Austronesians.

A comparison of texts on alchemy, one written in the China of the fourth century, the other composed in Europe during the sixteenth century, led Philippe Che to study the cause of their similarity. As he points out in his contribution 'La transmission des savoirs de la Chine à l'Europe à travers le monde

arabe' [25–31], the instructions on how to produce gold and silver, as well as experiments using mercury, had been passed on by Arab merchants.

To study an example of how acculturation really is the result of a reciprocal projection, Fong-Mao Lee appraises 'Les possibilités de l'intégration des communautés taoïste en Malaisie par delà les disparités ethniques et géographiques' [35–53]. Efforts by Malaysia's Chinese community to get Taoism recognized as one of the official religions failed, in the absence of charismatic leaders and the need to forge a structure above and beyond ethnic affiliation.

The penetration of Confucianism and its adoption in Vietnam is the gist of the contribution by Van Thao Trinh titled 'Indochine: identification d'une société confucéenne (le Viêt-Nam de 1802 à 1858)' [55–85]. Setting out from its 'importation' during the second and third centuries, the author underlines the co-existence of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism until in the fourteenth century, when Confucianism was decreed the state ideology. Highlighted is its strong impact on the contemporary literature, family structure and meritocracy, resulting in the adoption of the Chinese patrilineal clan system.

Those members of the Chinese community of the Hoa, inhabitants of the city of Cholon since the seventeenth century who stayed on after reunification in 1975, found themselves as 'the losers among the losers'. How miserable they feel is related by Michel Dolinski in his contribution titled 'Évolution

identitaire au sein de la communauté Hoa du Viêt-Nam de 1975 à nos jours' [87–107]. Formerly self-esteeming as superior on account of background and adherence to Confucianism, the Hoa of Cholon suffer the collective trauma of social demotion.

The interfacing of society, religion and politics is highlighted in the contribution titled 'L'Église catholique à Taïwan. Nouvelles approches culturelles et politiques de la construction nationale' [109–120] by Chantal Zheng. She juxtaposes the politically oriented Presbyterian Church, which lends support to the independence movement, and the Catholic Church, derogatorily labelled the "Kuomintang Church".

An ancestors' cult, centred on the belief that the deceased do not go to heaven but pass on to the "island of the dead" in the Tanimbar Archipelago, is reported by Simmone Pauwels in her contribution titled 'Le christianisme dans l'île de Selaru (Moluques, Indonésie orientale)' [121–126]. Evangelized by Dutch Protestant missionaries in 1917, the locals have practised some sort of fusion, reasoning that their time-honoured deity named Hula Sou (Moon and Sun) is identical with the Christians' God, whom they call Tuhan Allah.

Polynesians converted to Christianity by the middle of the nineteenth century are still in the process of adjusting their traditional cults to the Christian belief. As Françoise Douaire-Marsaudon reports in her contribution titled 'Christianisation et ancestralité à Tonga, Wallis et Futuna' [127–132], on Futuna

the murderer of a priest in 1841, who became the first martyr in Oceania, was recently pronounced a ‘negative hero’, yet a ‘hero’ nonetheless, who acts as mediator on divine matters.

Disentangling the thread that leads one to comprehend the research findings of Paul Mus, the great orientalist, is the gist of the contribution titled ‘La sociologie de Paul Mus, entre théorie et sens sur l’altérité vietnamienne’ [135–148] by Laurent Dartigues. Recognizing the scholar as a veritable intercessor between two worlds, the author highlights the theoretical framework and the anthropological model created by Paul Mus.

‘White supremacy’ ruled colonial populations, defining life in the cultural, social, economic and political spheres. The study by Gilles de Gantès titled ‘Les métis franco-indochinois à l’époque coloniale. À l’interface des dominants et des dominés ou à leur marge?’ [149–171] is focused on the people of mixed blood, who, despite their double identity, had no place in colonial society, rejected by the French and the Vietnamese.

Between 1948 and 1956, *Bayard*, a Catholic magazine for children and youth, published a cartoon featuring Europeans who had gone into the world to preach the gospel or to colonize. That analyzed by Alain Guillemin in his contribution titled “‘Parachutés au Laos”. La guerre du Viêt-Nam racontée aux enfants catholiques’ [173–189] relates the expulsion of the Japanese and the mission to subdue the ‘rebels’,

in other words, the communists.

Gender relations are the beacon of Taiwan’s three matrilineal societies of the Kavalan, Amis and Puyuma. The significance of these symbolic systems and corresponding rules of interaction are reported by Pi-Chen Liu in the contribution titled ‘Cerfs à chasser, coqs/cochons à sacrifier. Politique de sexe chez trois groupes austronésiens matrilineaires de Taïwan’ [191–205]. In all three societies, ritual practices are symbolically carried out using a totem animal – executed by men who act as mediators with the supernatural – and not by women.

Given the variety of topics and geographical spread, it is not feasible to highlight any particular aspect, or else recommend some over others. However, it seems justifiable to draw attention to those contributions which render research findings on phenomena of direct relevance for Southeast Asia. Variation is also evident in the presentations. While most by far are made complete with footnotes and/or listed references (‘bibliographie’), some seem sparingly documented, and a few leave one wondering if there really had been no relevant research hitherto conducted and results published. The contributions by Che, Dolinski, de Gantès, van der Grijp, Guo, Husson, Margolin, Sellato, and Wang contain numerous useful references to the pertinent literature published in the French, European or Asian languages.

To readers interested in anthropology, archaeology, ethnology, history,

linguistics, political science, sociology, and the broad spectrum of related interfacing, this set of collected papers might prove to be a mine of information that holds some valuable *trouvailles*.

Karl E. Weber

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Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad. Islam, Militancy, and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia*. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press (Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications (Studies on Southeast Asia, 40), 2006, 220 pp.

The presentation of facts, narration of events, explications of intersections or interfacing, and rigorous diagnosis are accomplished here almost to perfection – except for the flawed ‘Conclusion’.

For the *jihad* in the Moluccas approximately 7,000 fighters of the Holy War Force, *Laskar Jihad* (LJ) volunteers, were deployed to Ambon, beginning 30 April 2000. Their arrival imbued the local Muslim struggle with the spirit of *jihad* and intensified the aggressiveness. This stimulated Christian Moluccans to organize themselves. The commander-in-chief, Thalib, was acknowledged nationally as a hero. The greatest achievement of LJ was perhaps its successful dissemination of propaganda in Bahasa Indonesia and English. *Laskar Jihad Online* became an interactive channel, conveying messages worldwide. The government of President Abdurrahman Wahid sent a combined battalion to Ambon. The decisive attack in Kebun Cengkeh led to the defeat of LJ fighters on 24 June 2001.

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, allegations linking LJ to al Qaeda multiplied. Thalib admitted that he had met with Bin Laden and that a Bin Laden envoy had met him in Ambon. Thalib, however, accused Bin Laden of

being a sectarian (*khariji*), ignorant of proper Islam, thus repeating the harsh criticism of Bin Laden he had published in the journal *Salafy* seven years earlier. *Laskar Jihad Online* published a *fatwa* by the highest Saudi 'ulama, declaring that Bin Laden deviated from proper Islam because of his rebellion against the Saudi Arabian government. Indonesian government ministers met with representatives of Muslim and Christian parties in Malino, South Sulawesi where, on 12 February 2002, the Second Malino Agreement was signed. Five days after the bombing in Bali, on 12 October 2002, LJ disbanded.

Tracing the evolution of the ideology, the author focuses on the Salafi Islamic propagation movement, *da'wa*, representing the most puritanical sect of Islam, Wahhabism, and its expansion. The Salafis call themselves 'the people of the Prophetic Traditions'. The four main aims of the *Salafi da'wa* are to teach, purify, revive, and disseminate. The Salafis 'believe that the Muslim *umma* failed to avoid various forms of polytheism (*shirk*), reprehensible innovation (*bid'a*), and superstition (*khurafa*)'. Salafi communities multiplied, which led to the emergence of foundations. Beginning in the 1990s, they no longer needed to organize their activities secretly, upon the launching of an official Islamization strategy.

Addressing the antagonism of 'apolitical Salafism' and 'jihadist activism', the author set the theme by stating that 'the jihad discourse among Laskar Jihad fighters exemplifies a successful

amalgamation of doctrinaire-revivalist ideas and a militant battle cry'. The key criteria under deliberation are *tawhid*, 'to accept and believe in the oneness of God and His absolute authority'; *ahl al-Sunna wa'l-jama'a*, the followers of the Sunna of the Prophet and the first generation of Muslims (*Salif al-Salih*); *al-Wala wa'l-bara*, *al-wala* meaning 'to love, support, help, follow, defend' and *al-bara*, meaning 'to despise, desert, denounce'; *hizbiyya*, involvement in partisan politics; and *hakimiyya*, governance belongs to God, owing to God's absolute sovereignty.

Paradoxically, the Salafis accuse the Muslim Brotherhood of being enmeshed in the sins of *bid'a*, reprehensible innovations, especially because of its ambition to unite the Muslim *umma*. The Salafis oppose their rivals' active involvement in partisan politics, *hizbiyya*, for the following reasons: (1) it deviates from the way of faithful Muslims; (2) its leader comes perilously close to the sins of *bid'a*; (3) its members are committed to the doctrine of *al-wala wa'l-bara* on the basis of their loyalty to a particular leader rather than the Qur'an and Sunna; and (4) it teaches fanaticism. The Salafis insist that one devastating result of the *hizbiyya* movement is the spread of a revolutionary spirit among Muslims. A total rejection of democracy distinguishes the Salafis from members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jama'at-I Islami.

Salafis' inconsistency in their attitudes toward political activism seems unequivocal given the fact that they pio-

neered the call for *jihad* in the Moluccas. Salafis' repudiation of political activism is not an intrinsic part of their ideology, but rather a tactic and strategy. What they mean by *jihad* is clearly an armed war as a manifestation of the completeness of a Muslim's submission to God, which constitutes a higher obligation than the pilgrimage, prayer, or fasting. Given the contemporary scenario, with President Abdurrahman Wahid determined to foster democracy in discord with the military establishment that fanned the conflict rather than smothered it, the Salafis construed an emergency to justify their appointment of a contemporary imam who would unite them. Thus, Thalib had himself appointed leader, thereby disregarding the Salafists' repudiation of any *hizbiyya*, i.e. political partisanship.

The militancy of the Salafist movement is explained as the interfacing of nine factors: (1) the Hadramis' role in the dynamics of Islam in the archipelago; (2) the impact of the *Persatuan Islam* (Persis), a reformist organization established in 1923 whose members engaged in the *Sarekat Islam* (Islamic League, SI), active in criticizing nationalism, communism, and secularism; (3) the biography of the founder of LJ, Thalib, born into a Hadrami family active in al-Irsyad, a modernist Muslim organization of predominantly non-*sayyid* Hadramis, and granted a scholarship, in 1986, to study at the Mawdudi Islamic Institute in Lahore, Pakistan, where he volunteered to join the mujahidin in the Afghan War; (4) Thalib's support of

the *Jama'at al-Da'wa ila al-Qur'an wa Ahl-I Hadith*, a strict Salafi faction and Saudi Arabian 'principality' led by Jamil al-Rahman, which developed the most hostile attitude towards non-Muslims, frequently attacking journalists and humanitarian workers, resorting to iconoclasm, destroying statues and monuments, and attacking local religious practices they considered anathema to Islam; (5) Thalib's appointment, immediately upon his return from Afghanistan, as both the director of and teacher at the *Pesantren al-Irsyad Tenggara*; (6) Thalib's visit to Yemen, in 1990, to deepen his insights into Wahhabi teachings with Muqbil ibn Hadi al-Wadi'i, known as a Salafi ideologue *par excellence*, and then succeeding in gaining support that facilitated the dispatch of hundreds of Indonesian youth to study at the Islamic teaching centers associated with al-Wadi'i; (7) the *Sururiyya* issue, inflamed by Thalib to highlight the conflict between the Salafis and, particularly, the Muslim Brotherhood so as to reinforce his relationships with prominent Salafi authorities in Middle Eastern countries; (8) the wide propagation of the utopian scenario through the periodical *Salafy*; and (9) the network centered in the *Ihyaus Sunnah*, the pesantren established by Thalib in 1994 at Degolan Kaliurang, north of Yogyakarta.

Indonesia's transition to democracy challenged the Salafi movement to engage in *realpolitik* shortly after the collapse of the New Order regime in May 1998. The constellation that was deemed

conducive is diagnosed as caused by six factors: (1) With Habibie in power and given his attempt to involve hard-line Muslim organizations in helping him resist opposition challenges provided access for the Salafis to institutional action, particularly when the challenge faced by Habibie mounted in relation to the emergence of Megawati Sukarnoputri as a candidate for president. (2) The conflict between Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas erupted on 19 January 1999, and reached its peak after Wahid came to power in October 1999. In their battle against Wahid, the Salafis enjoyed the support not only of hard-line Muslim organizations but also of military elites, who saw the chance to utilize militant Muslim groups to retaliate against Wahid for sacking them from key military positions. (3) In January 2000, the Salafis issued their jihad resolution and proclaimed the establishment of the *Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal-Jama'ah* (FKAWJ), which was openly hostile to Wahid's political stance, thereby mobilizing a consensus. (4) By projecting the Moluccan conflict as evidence of a conspiracy to undermine Islam and destroy the territorial integrity of Indonesia, the Salafis combined religious rhetoric and nationalist sentiment. (5) The determination to fight *jihad* required the Salafis to request *fatwas* from religious authorities in the Middle East whom Thalib visited in order to persuade them personally. (6) To recruit and dispatch voluntary fighters, the FKAWJ organization was crucial with its hierarchical and bureaucratic

structure as well as network. FKAWJ also did not deny having received financial support from the transnational Salafi *da'wa* network.

Most LJ members were ethnically Javanese, aged between twenty and thirty-five years, almost half of them students, dropouts or graduates from science and engineering departments of a dozen universities. These recruits asserted their claim to be true Muslims by trading their Javanese (*abangan*) names for Arabic (Islamic) ones.

Wherever they clustered and settled, they constructed enclaves, called '*titik daura*' ('turn', i.e. workshop sites), a social system centered on modest mosques or *musallas*, smaller places to pray. The Salafis' enclave culture reinforced a hegemonic masculinity, a configuration of gender practice that legitimized the patriarchy as well as polygyny. The Salafi enclave did not have any particular political agenda. Nor did it have a specific programme of action. What it pursued was apparently mere rhetoric. It formed a domain in which a resistance identity was created. This resistance oscillated between two poles: enclave and *jihad*, which can transform marginality into centrality and defeat into patriotism.

Research is based on content and discourse analyses of a wide range of publications, including LJ internal documents, speeches, talks, public sermons, and two stints of intensive fieldwork with visits to Jakarta, Bandung, Cirebon, Semarang, Salatiga, Solo, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Makassar and Ambon. Inter-

views were conducted with LJ group leaders and members, sympathizers, veterans of LJ missions in the Moluccas, common people, local militia members, and leaders of Muslim and Christian communities, totaling around 300 persons. The author also recorded life histories, participated in collective prayers and religious gatherings, and contacted institutions and organizations to trace the relationship between LJ and other Islamic groups.

What the author offers under the label of 'Conclusion' (pp.215–221) are assorted findings already presented in various chapters; some fallacies, few research hypotheses, and authentic conclusions underpinned by original research.

The author's authentic and salient conclusions deserve to be summarized as follows: (1) The Salafis' resort to violence by LJ proves that their repudiation of political activism was more a strategy to deal with the distressing and discouraging political situation that prevailed under the New Order regime. (2) The decision to resort to violence went hand-in-hand with the radicalization of its ideology. (3) Deprived youth felt that *jihad* is one way to express their resentment and frustration. By joining the LJ, they had the opportunity to flaunt their new religious identity, negotiate their illusory strength, and resist their own sense of marginalization. (4) This action was an endeavor to shore up their self-image as the most committed defenders of Islam, and thereby reinforce their identity. (5) Despite its limited

contribution in terms of participation in real battles, LJ claimed the public role of heroes predestined to sacrifice their lives in defending Moluccan Muslims.

This is both a perturbing and elucidating research study. The reader is challenged to grasp the sheer complexity of LJ dynamics in its turbulent context, as reflected in the somewhat complicated narration and diagnosis of an episode that sadly caused the death of many people. A list of abbreviations, glossary, extensive bibliography supplemented by listings of newspapers and magazines as well as websites, and a highly detailed index enhance the timely usefulness of this book.

Karl E. Weber

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