

## REVIEWS

Peter Skilling, ed., *Past Lives of the Buddha: Wat Si Chum — Art, Architecture and Inscriptions*. With contributions by Pattaratorn Chirapravati, Pierre Pichard, Prapod Assavirulhakarn, Santi Pakdeekham, and Peter Skilling. Bangkok, River Books, 2008, 296 pp., numerous illustrations. ISBN 978 974 9863 45 9.

*Past Lives of the Buddha* is a significant publication that both students of Buddhism in general and those with a special interest in the culture of fourteenth-century Sukhothai will find valuable. Engravings depicting Jātaka, the tales of the previous lives of the Buddha, were executed on stone and installed as the ceiling of a staircase-tunnel at Wat Si Chum, and these are the book's core subject. One of the slate slabs has been on view for decades in the National Museum, Bangkok; it has long been admired for the mastery of line it displays and recognized as the fountainhead of all Siamese two-dimensional religious art.

As the editor Peter Skilling remarks, *Past Lives* is the first multi-disciplinary study of any Sukhothai monument. He put together a team that includes an art historian, an architectural analyst and historian, and an epigraphist (the engravings are accompanied by explanatory inscriptions), as well as a formidably learned Buddhologist, this being Skilling himself. To grasp the

aims and possibilities of the project is also to recognize that the book delivers less than it promises, primarily because of the absence of a sufficient emphasis on chronological development. The opportunity to look at Wat Si Chum and its engravings in time presented itself, but in this book the chapter on art history contains more a summary of the conclusions of others than a fresh effort to determine the position of the engravings through comparative chronological study. The chapter on architecture does not directly address chronological issues, and the expected epigraphical chart, accompanied by a discussion of what conclusions may be drawn from it, is absent altogether. Nevertheless, the book is and will forever remain an indispensable catalogue of the Wat Si Chum engravings.

Chapter 1, "Illustrating the lives of the Bodhisatta at Wat Si Chum," by Pattaratorn Chirapravati, introduces the subject and describes how the engravings became known to the world at large—primarily as a result of the visit in 1891 of Lucien Fournereau, who had rubbings made that were published in 1908. In fact, considerable use of these rubbings (or ink squeezes, *estampages*) is made in this book because so many of the slabs, which are also illustrated in recent color photographs, have deteriorated in the past one hundred years, their surfaces having flaked off. Dr Pattaratorn describes Sukhothai Inscription number two, found at the entrance of the staircase-tunnel, a long text describing the travels and religious foundations

of a royally-born monk, Si Sattha, the presumed author of the inscription. The text, because of obscurities, lacunae, and lack of clarifying detail has given rise to considerable controversy—much of it to be found in old issues of this journal. What Dr Pattaratorn (and subsequently Peter Skilling) does state is that Inscription II and Wat Si Chum are indissolubly linked and that the inscription has nothing to do with Wat Mahathat at Sukhothai. The inscription's carved stones with 500 Jātaka were never installed there, and, by extension, all the religious foundations described concern other monuments. George Cœdès's assignment of Inscription II to Wat Mahathat and the ingenious theories of A. B. Griswold and Betty Gosling concerning Jātakas and building activities there need not in the future play a part in scholarly discourse. But Dr Pattaratorn refuses to wade into the swamp of Inscription II interpretation. Having made her main point, that the "large and lofty cetiya" surrounded by the 500 Jātaka (2.2.39) is really the "Śrīdhāṇakatakā" (2.2.36–37) and that the latter is the great stupa of Amara-vati, she stops short of trying to clarify whether the other place-names in the same sentence indicate the monument's location (Cœdès, Griswold) or are sites in an itinerary (Prasert na Nagara, in his *Saraniphon*, 1998, p. 160), or where the "gathering point of all the Lord's relics" in the immediately preceding section (2.2.18–35) was located.

Dr Pattaratorn proposes that the reliefs date from the third quarter of the fourteenth century, her opinion stem-

ing from views previously expressed by others and reinforced, as she sees it, by discussions of the motif of the ecclesiastical fan, the depiction of ascetics, and the design of Chinese-type floral emblems—discussions that are informative and interesting but do not go far to narrow the date or to lock the engravings in a position in a stylistic sequence. She briefly mentions Dr Prasert's epigraphical analysis (as later does Peter Skilling), which pointed out that two features, the spelling of *phrayā* with a *z* and the use of a little circle for a superscript dot, do not appear in dated inscriptions until those of 1392, but does not explain exactly why she ends up discounting his views.

Pierre Pichard's chapter, "The *Mondop* at Wat Si Chum: New Perspectives," in addition to providing accurate plans and elevations, brings important and provocative observations to the table. The walls of the square *mondop* enclosing the giant seated Buddha are extremely thick, 2.7 m, the corridor they contain, with the structurally integral slabs bearing Jātaka overhead, ranging only 40–43 cm in width. This would not have been the case, nor would the upper parts of the walls, on the inside, have tapered inward, had not a massive brick superstructure originally been planned. He also remarks upon the similarity of the three massive superposed steps abutting the base, which reach a total height of 4 m, to a comparable feature at Chedi Ku Kut, Lamphun. He proposes that the architects planned a fantastic tower nearly 60 m in height; there would have

been four additional stories diminishing in height, each hiding a continuation of the winding hidden staircase and therefore, ultimately, all 547 Jātaka. Pichard's contention that the architects must have planned to build a superstructure is persuasive, but his proposed solution—one that necessarily accommodates ceiling slabs with all 547 Jātaka—is based on assumptions that are not adequately addressed anywhere in the book: namely, that the number of Jātaka planned for the extant staircase, an even one hundred, had no particular significance, and that the engraved slabs on the ceiling, rather than the lost murals on the walls, provided the primary content. Nevertheless, surely Pichard is correct to suggest that there is a relationship between the character of Inscription II and the unique architecture. “To inspire the confidence of his contemporaries, he [Si Sattha, the author of the inscription] may have referred to remote monuments as precedents and models to be emulated, if not surpassed, in their own country.”

Pichard suggests that the *mondop* may have been the earliest structure of this type in Sukhothai or Si Satchanalai. He does not tell us whether he thinks the *wihān* facing the *mondop* on the east is contemporary, nor does he acknowledge that Sukhothai image halls were subjected to a typological and chronological analysis by Betty Gosling. Nevertheless, his view of the approximate date is revealed by the speculation that the project could have been cut short by the death of Si Sattha (which might have occurred in 1376).

Chapter 3, “Narrative, art and ideology: *Jātakas* from India to Sukhothai,” is a far-ranging study by Peter Skilling, displaying his erudition, his command of many different topics of relevance, and his profound grasp of Buddhist doctrine. He sets the scene in India, describing reliefs at the stupas of Sanchi and Bharhut, the workings of oral transmission, the textual context of *Jātakas*, and the creation of the Pāli-language *Jātaka* collection. Then there is an overview of *Jātakas* in Siam, in both art (from Dvaravati to the twentieth-century Vessantara illustrations of Hem Wechakon) and text (written, recited, translated). An account of the study of *Jātakas* in the West follows. Wat Si Chum is then described, and there is a fascinating and comprehensive description of the development of knowledge about the monument, as found in the writings of both Thais and Europeans. Skilling does not commit himself when it comes to the dating of the engravings, deferring to the opinion of Dr Pattaratorn expressed in Chapter I. The chapter closes with a caustic survey of some of the statements about the *Jātaka* engravings to be found in art history books. Skilling believes that “a discourse of influence. . . still dominates Thai art history.” He invokes the opinion of the respected art historian Michael Baxandall, who pointed out that the artist is the active party and that *influence* should be replaced by terms such as “draw on, resort to, avail oneself of,” or any one of forty-eight others, including *copy*. *Copy* is Skilling's choice (though some of us consider this word more

pernicious than *influence*): “Copying brings merit; copying transmits power and prestige; copying is fundamental to the production of what we classify as ‘Buddhist art’.” These terminological issues will seem abstract to a number of readers because of the absence of illustrations that would permit an independent judgment about just how much or how little the Jātaka engravings have in common with the art of Sri Lanka.

Despite the range of this chapter, there are several matters that Skilling regrettably must have thought fell outside the limits he had set for himself. One is the question of textual transmission in the two preceding centuries and the relative roles played by Sri Lanka, Thaton, and other places (including Lamphun). Standard accounts depend much on the theories of Gordon H. Luce, who may have read too much into the numbers 547 and 550 (as being the total number of Jātaka) and into differences in the ordering of the last ten Jātaka. Another matter upon which Skilling could surely have cast much light had he chosen to do so is that of the perfections and how the Pāli list of ten perfections became associated with the last ten Jātaka in Siam. Finally, in discussing the ways the tunnel-staircase resembles a relic chamber (the engravings were not intended to be seen, nor the inscriptions read), he fails to describe the ways they differ. There is no evidence the stair was ever sealed off, and, though we know nothing about how often monks or honored lay people ascended, it remained an enterable space in the consciousness of the associated

community. Furthermore, the glosses briefly describe the subject matter of the Jātakas in colloquial Thai, binding the engravings to this community, rather than relegating them to a heavenly realm in which only Pāli is spoken.

Chapter 4 is a brief introduction to Part II of the book which (in 153 pages) illustrates all the engravings, translates each of the illustrated Jātaka from the Pāli, provides the text and a translation of each of the inscriptions, and illustrates and comments upon two sites that serve a comparative function, the first being the Ananda temple at Pagan (ca. 1100), where the Jātaka are illustrated by individual glazed terracotta plaques (in photographs by Lilian Handlin), and Wat Khrua Wan, Thonburi (ca. 1850), where the *uposatha* hall bears murals with 538 panels illustrating individual Jātaka. Wat Khrua Wan could well have been an entirely independent creation; the illustrations, that is, were directly based upon a reading of the text. Whether that is the case at Wat Si Chum is unclear; at least some comparable compositional formulae appear also at the Ananda temple, suggesting the possibility of a common model (in the form, say, of a painting on cloth). But this matter is not addressed in the text. At any rate, at Pagan, Jātaka were also illustrated in murals, and surely artists used models there. In this regard, it is strange that the full publication of the murals and glosses at the Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi in *Artibus Asiae* in 1971 should have been neglected.

The Pāli Jātaka is ordered according

to the number of verses in each tale; the first 150 stories have only a single verse, and the prose narrative around the verse is generally brief. This means that Skilling is able to present complete, or nearly complete, translations, far easier to read than the ones published in 1895 (and still in print). Footnotes sometimes draw attention to difficulties in the Pāli text, or to a superior reading to be found in the Siamese or Burmese printed edition. It turns out that some of the identifications in Fournereau's 1906 publication were erroneous and that the errors have persisted in more recent studies. When the totally effaced stones are correctly accounted for, the engravings are found to reflect the Pāli accurately. New photography (credited to Paisarn Piammettawat and Pattana Decha) illuminates the character of the engraved lines brilliantly — though it is also dispiriting, because it shows the extent to which the slabs have deteriorated. (Fournereau's rubbings are also generally reproduced.)

Here is an example of an inscription, that for Jātaka 13: "Kandi jātaka. Phra Bodhisatta was a deity in the forest. Khamrop 13." The inscriptions appear clearly in photographs, and then twice in modern Thai script, first transliterated letter by letter, and second in modern spellings. There are a number of places where more annotation would have been welcome — about the spellings of words, about the accuracy with which they reflect the Pāli text, and about their degree of rarity, but the book provides the materials that make it possible to study such

matters in the future. There is a helpful index of the words in the inscriptions (though it has some omissions). As for the missing chart of letters, comparing their form with those in other Sukhothai inscriptions, it may not be here, but one can be found in the 1998 publication by Prasert na Nagara (p. 165). At any rate, it can be said that now anyone who wishes to pursue the study of Wat Si Chum will be able to depend on this meticulous and handsome publication.

Hiram Woodward

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Dawn F. Rooney, *Ancient Sukhothai, Thailand's Cultural Heritage*. Bangkok, River Books, 2008, 247 pp., paperback, ISBN 978 974 9863 42 8.

Dawn Rooney's new book, *Ancient Sukhothai: Thailand's Cultural Heritage*, does an admirable job in covering both the historical and current setting as well as acting as a guide to the most important sites in Sukhothai's historical parks. It fills a significant need, particularly since Sukhothai was declared a World Heritage Site in 1991. Dawn Rooney has impressive credentials and is thus an appropriate author for a new book on Sukhothai.

The book is divided into two parts: the setting and the sites. Included in the first are chapters on the geography, history, inscriptions, beliefs, festivals, art and architecture, and ceramics. The second part deals with extant monuments within the Sukhothai, Si Satchanalai, and Kamphaeng Phet Historical Parks, Chalieng, and the Bang Kang ceramic archeological site.

Clear and concise maps precede each section, with large maps of the two most important sites, the Sukhothai and Si Satchanalai Historical Parks, on the endpapers, with the inner cities highlighted for handy reference.

This work is neither a scholarly compendium of the Sukhothai kingdom's history and legacy nor an art historian's in-depth analysis of the Sukhothai artistic tradition in sculpture and architecture. It is, however, a very high-class guidebook with the merit

of having much pertinent background information. The Sukhothai sites have here been studied in depth, are presented in an organized manner, and described often quite engagingly. While Rooney's expertise in ceramics is one of the strong points of the book, there are some small flaws in the areas of religion, mythology, and architectural decorations.

The section 'Preserving Sukhothai' (p.10) addresses problems concerning the restoration of a venerable ancient site of 'what, how, and how much'. An early effort was made by the Fine Arts Department in the 1950s and 1960s to make the site accessible to the public as soon as possible. Thus rapid restorations were made in concrete by unskilled workers. Later more sensitive restorations allowed some very beautiful details to be admired in their original form.

The table entitled 'Terms in Guide' (p.11) could have been more helpful as a quick reference if the author had given the foreign term most often used in architecture and sculpture followed by an English equivalent such as '*mudra*: gesture of the hands' with their Pala and Sanskrit transliterations in the glossary.

The problem with any book of this nature that goes beyond the usual guidebook listing of facts, figures, and locations is the lack of cited sources and a reliance on generalities to cover complex topics. Because of the vast amount of important information available, the author has a predicament as to how much to include. Might she have been

better off writing two separate books? One would have been a guidebook with the current site section left intact and the setting section rigorously condensed and reorganized, deleting repetitive photographs and copy, replacing them with cross-references. A second book would cover Sukhothai's history, art, cultural, and religions, with appropriate analysis, comparisons, cited sources, and more nuanced and in-depth analysis. That said, the present volume as it stands fulfils its purpose of describing the cultural settings of the historical parks in the Sukhothai area.

Helpful in the setting section are the many maps, including topography, riverine systems and location of major Sukhothai sites. Rooney also has an outstanding summary of Sukhothai's pre- and protohistory, particularly the first millennium, rightly stressing the necessity of looking outside traditional boundaries.

In the part on inscriptions, Rooney succinctly sums up the history, content, importance, and controversy over the dating and authorship of the Ramkhamhaeng Inscription No. 1. She includes a two-page insert with translation of the monument's four faces.

Despite the book's outstanding features, there are several small omissions and errors. Under 'beliefs', the author makes a pithy summary of the three major belief systems: animism, Brahmanism/Hinduism and Buddhism. However, the historical nuances of Theravada Buddhism (p.31) are difficult to describe in such a summary, as many early splin-

ter schools of 'Hinayana' existed apart from the Theravada. At Sukhothai, the important reforms of Sri Lanka Buddhism *sihalabhikku* sect in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries are not considered. The reference to Mahayana should have included its many variant forms, such as Vajrayana, Tantric, Zen, etc. The Hindu god Brahma is mislabeled in the photo caption of the Chalieng gate at Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat (p.31) and again in the text (p.190). Current research identifies the four heads as those of a Mahayanist deity (probably Vajrasattva).

In her 'Key episodes in the Buddha's life' (pp.32–3), Rooney shows a set of mural paintings from the early Bangkok period with text stating: 'aspects ... that appear in narrative reliefs at Sukhothai [are] highlighted in bold face' without identifying the provenance of the Sukhothai reliefs. Several errors appear in this section: 'The Great Departure' paragraph states that 'guards helped him [the future Buddha] by opening the town gates and carrying the horse's hooves ...' but as shown in one of the paintings (and according to legend) these enablers were actually *thewada* or guardian deities. Also the order of episodes in the life of the Buddha is incorrect: in most Thai depictions of the legend, Indra demonstrates to the Buddha-to-be the middle way (by plucking a three-stringed instrument) before the attack by Mara. While two other paintings in these pages show the Buddha-to-be in the *maravijaya* posture, there is no illustration of this iconic episode.

In the art and architecture section (pp.38–53), the paragraph on ‘influences’ is a summary of a complex and difficult topic. An auxiliary box (p.44) identifies the *stupa*’s main architectural elements and symbolism. The addition of the generally used term of *harmika* when writing of ‘the box above the body’ and ‘throne of the Buddha’ would have helped in understanding Rooney’s subsequent references to ‘a square box-like structure’. The ‘base and multiple tiers’ below the bell would better be described as ‘three rings representing the three spheres of Desire, Form and Non-Form’. The ‘lotus-bud spire’ (in contrast to the lotus-bud tower) is actually ‘the lotus-bud tip or finial’ as the ringed spire itself represents the heavens or the path to nirvana, not nirvana itself.

Rooney identifies four types of Sukhothai *stupa*, including a ‘*stupa* with niches for images’ and mentions a Lanna ‘inspiration’ but without references. There are, indeed, some similarities in form between several Sukhothai *stupa* (the four axial towers at Mahathat, two *stupa* at Wat Chedi Chet Thaeo, Si Satchanalai) and early northern *stupa* in Chiang Saen, such as the superstructure of Wat Pa Sak. While these comparisons are limited to those *stupa* with four small *stupa* (*stupika*) surrounding the bell (also a Srivijaya convention), niches with Buddha images facing the four quarters seem to be a pan-Thai convention.

That ‘a pediment is a triangular form’ (p.48) is not always true at Sukhothai:

sometimes pediments are semi-circular, arched or curvilinear. At Sukhothai they are framed (or double framed) in floral /flame designs terminating in *makara* extruding a three-headed crowned *naga*, or *kinnari* making a *wai*, or a *makara* alone. Not all the descriptions of the arch frames are complete or correct: Rooney often refers to the reptilian creatures as ‘serpents’ (pp.48, 126, 164, 190) while actually they are the mythical *naga* or, more usually, the *makara* extruding the *naga*. The book would have been enhanced by a description and visual identification of the many mythical creatures (*makara*, *naga*, *thephanom*, *thewada*, *singha*, *kala*, etc.) whose energetic, powerful, and protective presence enlivened the architectural decorations.

Under the section ‘Looking at a Sukhothai Buddha image’, (p.50) the author gives an excellent description of what most Thais consider their highest sculptural achievement. In Southeast Asian art the Buddha is conceived as a monk wearing the proscribed three untailored pieces of cloth (*uttarasanga*, *antaravasaka*, *sanghati*) which are not one garment, as is intimated in the text (pp.50, 52, 53). Rooney’s description that the hair curls ‘... suggest he was neither a prince ... nor a monk ...’ is incorrect. After cutting his hair, the future Buddha became a monk and, because his hair curled so tightly, he never had to shave his head again. The three parallel lines at the neck (p.50) do not indicate ‘greatness’ but are traditional Thai symbols of beauty, and the bulges

at the abdomen (p.51) do not indicate a balanced weight (neither fat nor thin) but, according to Griswold, are the result of yogic breathing.

Dawn Rooney is particularly strong on the ceramics of the Sukhothai era and is a renowned authority on the subject. In a comprehensive handling of the material, she covers the sites, the products, techniques, terminology, and kiln types, as well as the seminal research done by Don Heim on the Ban Koi Noi area and by the late Roxanna Brown on findings from contemporary shipwrecks. Two pages of stunning photographs on 'Types of Ceramics' are followed by two pages of 'Architectural Ceramics' now in museums in the Sukhothai area. While the former have detailed captions (body and glaze description, size, date, original and current location), the latter have no size, date, nor original location given. For example, on p.63, what is the size of the fascinating shard (showing part of a face with an *urna* on the forehead) in relation to the guardian demon figure below?

In the section on sites, Rooney's knowledge, studies and dedication are apparent in the abundant details about the most important places. She should be commended for her thorough research as demonstrated here by the inclusion of facts related to height, width, length, distance, as well as dates concerning founding, excavations and restorations.

Each section begins with a double-page photograph, an overall map and a recommended itinerary, including ones

for 'biking, walking, tuk-tuk or motor tour'. Suggestions for the best time of day, where to relax and contemplate Sukhothai, as well as rectangular tab inserts giving location and direction make the guide invaluable. She does an outstanding job in describing the physical architectural elements of each structure from base to tier to spire, followed by decorative details, a technique that encourages the viewer to study the edifice rather than give it a cursory glance.

Wat Mahathat in this section justifiably takes pride of place as Dr Rooney devotes eight pages (pp.74–81) to its description. Missing, however, are photographs of the two extant stucco bas-reliefs on the auxiliary *prang* detailing the birth and death of the Buddha. With their stunning frames of floral/flames surmounted by a *kala* and terminating in *makara* and *kinnari*, they show strong Sri Lankan influences and are of surpassing beauty.

Helpful appendices list the kings of Thailand (those pertaining to Sukhothai history), geographical statistics, travel information, recommended reading, glossary, and an index. While the book contains an excellent recommended reading list, a complete bibliography should include several seminal sources, notably Griswold's, *Towards A History of Sukhodaya Art*, the 'Epigraphical and Historical Studies' of Griswold and Prasert na Nagara in *JSS*, and M.C. Suphadradis Diskul's *Sukhothai Art*.

Overall, the book suffers occasionally from repetitive photographs and

problematic captions. An example is the ceramic architectural finial of the *makara*. In the frontispiece it is labeled as a 'mythical creature', on p.62 the same piece is incorrectly labeled as a *naga*, while on p.85 the creature appears with three companions that are incorrectly labeled as 'serpents, *makara* and lions' whereas, in fact, the photograph shows no *naga* but three *makara* and one *singha*.

Despite these quibbles, this book is the definitive work to date on Sukhothai: it is a major contribution to the appreciation of Sukhothai period art and architecture within its historical and cultural context. This reviewer would strongly recommend that every Sukhothai-bound individual, whether scholar, 'Sukhothai lover', dedicated traveler, or casual tourist, have this guide in hand.

The book begins and ends with two stunning symbolic photographs: the frontispiece captures a classic Sukhothai *stupa* in early morning sunlight while the last photograph features the same *stupa* darkly silhouetted against a twilight sky.

Carol Stratton

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H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *A Biography of King Naresuan the Great*, translated and edited by Kennon Breazeale. Bangkok and Samutprakan: Toyota Thailand Foundation and the Foundation for the Promotion of Social Science and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2008, xxxiii+213 pp., maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index ISBN 978-974-06-9716-9, Bt.600.

This is a multi-layered book and will be interesting and useful to different audiences for different reasons. At face value, *A Biography of King Naresuan the Great* is a historical account of the great warrior king Naresuan. Naresuan, by pulling Ayutthaya together after its collapse and submission to the Burmese in the 1560s and reversing the kingdom's military fortunes in its struggles with the Burmese probably has a place similar to that held by the warrior king Alaunghpaya (r. 1752–1760) among the Burmese for his military successes against the court of Pegu in the 1752–1757 period. Naresuan, known as 'the Black Prince' in some Western accounts, personally led the armies of Ayutthaya on horse and elephant, pushing the Burmese invaders back over the mountains. Naresuan even twice took his own forces into Burma, first to besiege Pegu in 1596 and then again, after Pegu fell, to besiege Toungoo in 1600. By reversing Ayutthaya's military fortunes and leading the transition from a defensive strategy to an offensive campaign, Naresuan in a very short time guaranteed Ayutthaya's survival for over a century

and half, until it finally fell to the Burmese again, in 1767. Even if we account for the demise of First Toungoo Burma on the basis mainly of internal administrative problems that gradually deprived the royal center of resources, or forced it to overdraw those it did possess, it was Naresuan's constant pressure that steadily whittled away at those forces the Burmese were able to muster. The reign of Naresuan thus fully merits the attention given it.

On another level, the book is interesting as an example of the hobby interests of the original author, Prince Damrong (1862–1943), one of the chief architects of the modern Thai state and one of the most prominent Thai intellectuals of the twentieth century. A son of King Mongkut (r. 1851–1868), Prince Damrong played an important role in developing the administrative underpinnings of the court-dominated state, a role that led to his ten-year exile (1932–1942) from Thailand to the island of Penang (then part of the British Straits Settlements) after the 1932 coup ended royal absolutism. It was technically during this exile that Prince Damrong produced this book, but Prince Damrong's fascination with, research on, and publications about Naresuan were already in place long before the coup. One of his most significant efforts, including substantial material on Naresuan, for example, saw published form in 'Our Wars with the Burmese: Thai-Burmese Conflict 1539–1767', serialized in the *Journal of the Siam Society* fifteen years earlier (and recently republished

by White Lotus). Moreover, one year before his exile, Prince Damrong had overseen the production of wall paintings on Naresuan's life at the Wat Suwandararam (these paintings are reproduced in a special section of the present book, pp. 167–183). The present study is certainly a window to Prince Damrong's insights on the Thai past, but one that provides important glimpses at the complicated balance the man had to maintain between his administrative burdens and his passion for historical research, a tension made clear in occasional passages put forward rather bluntly in Prince Damrong's own words (pp. 120–121). Adding to this particular element of the book, Prince Damrong's intellectual contributions, the publishers have also issued an accompanying text, entitled *The Writing of Prince Damrong Rajanubhad: A Chronology with Annotations*, also compiled, annotated, and introduced by Breazeale.

With the study's translation into English, the translator and editor Dr Kennon Breazeale (East-West Center, Hawaii) provides another layer. Breazeale is a leading expert on early modern Thai and Lao history during the period and has produced several works on the subject. Most relevant here are an article by Breazeale, 'A Transition in Historical Writing: The Works of Prince Damrong Rachanuphap', published in the *Journal of the Siam Society* in 1971 (vol. 59, no. 2) and his translation of Prince Damrong's *Journey through Burma in 1936* (Bangkok, River Books, 1991). Beyond rendering the present

study by Prince Damrong into English, Breazeale has included an introduction (pp. xvi–xvii), extensive historical notes (pp. 129–166), and the aforementioned section on the Wat Suwandararam wall paintings. The notes are well researched and provide necessary explanation where Prince Damrong did not. The old controversy regarding details of the manner of death of Burmese King Nandabayin's (r. 1581–1599) crown prince who was in the midst of doing battle with Naresuan, for example, is discussed at length (pp. 149–150), identifying important sources contributing to the emergence of conflicting accounts, clearly marking out the trail for readers with further interest in the episode to follow. As a result, the value of the publication for researchers on Thai and Burmese history during the period has been increased substantially.

Finally, the volume offers both a study of warfare during the period and an example of the place of warfare in Thai intellectual history during Prince Damrong's own lifetime. Prince Damrong's eyes do not focus on the nitty-gritty of combat, but he does a fair job of showing us the role played by Naresuan (and thus by the elites generally) and his commanders in warfare. Some of the more interesting details are those regarding the strategy and tactics attributed by Prince Damrong to Naresuan in the latter's successful defense of Ayutthaya against Nandabayin in 1586–1587 (pp. 53–60). In Prince Damrong's account of his own role in discovering the stupa that commemorated

Naresuan's combat on elephant back, provided in the present translation as a separate appendix (pp. 120–128), he notes that Naresuan followed an example included in the Sri Lankan chronicle, the *Mahavamsa*. Naresuan, in building the stupa, was consciously imitating the act of a Sinhalese king eighteen hundred years earlier after the latter's victory over a Tamil invader (p. 125). Further, the images included in the appendix devoted to the Wat Suwandararam paintings reflect the vision of Prince Damrong's own time of warfare centuries earlier, and not direct evidence of the conduct and technology of earlier warfare. Nevertheless, they provide us with evidence of how warfare was being re-imagined at that time just before Thailand moved toward the heightened militarism of the 1930s and early 1940s. The volume thus is a welcome contribution to a growing body of work on warfare in the region in the early modern period and its place in the intellectual history of twentieth century Thailand.

Presented in fluid, intelligently formulated prose, *A Biography of King Naresuan the Great* is recommended for both general audiences interested in Southeast Asian history and for specialists in the history of Thailand, Burma, and warfare in Southeast Asia generally. It should be of great interest even to those with access to earlier Thai-language versions of Prince Damrong's work as the present edition offers much more that makes its reading indispensable to understanding the core study it has

so admirably succeeded in translating for a broader audience.

Michael W. Charney

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Leonor de Seabra, *The Embassy of Pero Vaz de Siqueira to Siam (1684–1686)*. Documents transcribed from the Historical Archives of Goa, translated by Custódio Cavaco Martins, Mário Pinharanda Nunes and Alan Norman Baxter. Macau, University of Macau Press, 2005, 400 pp., ISBN 9993726583.

Anyone who has read about Thai history in the 1680s will be familiar with the two embassies sent by King Louis XIV of France to the court of King Narai. Alexandre de Chaumont arrived as ambassador in 1685 and was followed by Simon de La Loubère in 1687. They were preceded in 1685 by the embassy sent by Shah Sulaiman of Persia. The first of the grand embassies, however, represented the King of Portugal, and until recently, very few details about this mission have been published.

While Leonor de Seabra was conducting research in the archives of Goa, for a master's thesis on Portuguese-Thai relations, an unpublished manuscript came to her attention. It had been described in Charles Boxer's 1950 inventory of manuscripts in Goa (in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 14: 308), but had never been published and apparently never even cited by historians of Thailand. She transcribed the manuscript (the official report of the 1684 Portuguese embassy to the court of King Narai), together with numerous contemporary documents concerning the Portuguese embassy and the embassy that King

Narai attempted unsuccessfully to send to Lisbon during 1685–6. This collection of documents was published by the University of Macau Press in 2003 with the title *A Embaixada ao Sião de Pero Vaz de Siqueira (1684–1686)*. In 2005 the same press issued a translation of the book in English.

Ambassador Siqueira was a well-to-do trader of Macau, appointed by the Portuguese viceroy at Goa for a special mission to the court of King Narai. He reached Paknam the last week of March 1684 and stayed in Ayutthaya and Lopburi from April to June. During this period, King Narai was residing at his new palace at Lopburi, still partly under construction (and described in detail in these documents). He received the ambassador there in a formal audience in May and gave a glittering night-time audience in June for the leave-taking.

The main text in this publication is a long report that describes the events of the mission, starting with Siqueira's ceremonial departure from Macau in March 1684. The extant copy of the manuscript ends with the leave-taking audience and return to Ayutthaya. The remainder of the report has not been located, but fortunately for historians, it contained only the details of the departure from Ayutthaya in July 1684 and return to Macau. This report, which accounts for about two-thirds of the documentation in the book, was compiled not by Siqueira but by the secretary of the embassy, Francisco Fragozo.

To supplement Fragozo's report, Seabra has added other Portuguese

documents concerning plans for the embassy in 1682–3, the viceroy's 1683 instructions to Siqueira and letters written to the viceroy by Siqueira and by Portuguese residents of Ayutthaya. Several appended documents are concerned with the three Thai ambassadors who arrived in Goa in April 1685 on a Thai ship. Their continuing adventures are not mentioned in this book; they sailed in 1686 on a Portuguese ship, which was bound for Lisbon but was wrecked at the southern tip of Africa, and from there, they returned home with Dutch assistance (see *A Siamese Embassy Lost in Africa, 1686*, edited by Michael Smithies, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1999). A few appended documents of much later date are concerned with Siqueira's family and his estate.

Unlike the well-known books by Alexandre de Chaumont, Simon de La Loubère and others involved in the French embassies of this period, these Portuguese texts were not intended for publication and do not attempt a general description of the kingdom. Instead, they provide insiders' views from the Portuguese perspective and record confidential proposals that were withheld even from the Thai negotiators only until near the end of Siqueira's visit. The mission could be called a failure, because none of its true objectives was accomplished.

The viceroy's confidential instructions to Siqueira are on pages 350–8, near the end of the volume. Readers ought to see them before reading the Frago report. Officials in Goa were

convinced that the French bishops, who first arrived in Asia only two decades earlier, were the vanguard of French commercial interests and that they would pave the way for the French trading company to move into key positions in mainland Southeast Asia and onward into China, thereby robbing the Portuguese of their markets. The viceroy's foremost wish, therefore, was to persuade King Narai to expel the French bishop and missionaries. The impossibility of this plan became apparent to Siqueira immediately after consulting the leaders of the Portuguese community, including the highest-ranking Catholic priest at Ayutthaya. King Narai had already sent a formal embassy to France, which in fact was lost at sea; he sought the advice of the French bishop regularly; and there was no justifiable reason to expel people who had committed no wrong in Thai eyes.

Siqueira was unable to propose the expulsion, and his accomplishments were reduced to three points: reaffirming the long-time friendship between the Portuguese and Thai kings, thanking King Narai for his kind treatment of the Portuguese who resided in his kingdom, and asking the king to prevent the French missionaries and bishops from troubling the Portuguese residents. These were the points officially stated in the viceroy's letter to the king, and so the mission was a resounding success, when measured by those criteria in the Frago report.

Of greater interest to general readers and historians is the wealth of detail

provided throughout the account by Fragoso, even though intended for only the viceroy and a few other officials in Goa. He took great care in his descriptions of meetings with high officials, the royal audiences, an informal elephant round-up with King Narai and other ceremonial occasions, as a means of recording the unprecedented honours shown to the ambassador and stressing Siqueira's great diplomatic accomplishments. Letters to the viceroy from independent sources in Ayutthaya (among Seabra's appended documents) are less enthusiastic, reveal some of Siqueira's shortcomings and express doubt that any practical agreements had been reached. Nevertheless, from the superficial diplomatic perspective, the embassy was carried out with great pomp and ceremony, the friendliest gestures were made by both sides and Siqueira sailed away, leaving Thai-Portuguese relations in a momentarily refreshed state.

The text reveals an obsession with details of protocol for the formal audiences. Siqueira had strict orders from the viceroy to insist on European customs, which were adopted by the king for the first time and paved the way for the French ambassadors who arrived soon after. Although Siqueira was allowed to wear his shoes, the Thai officials managed to get their way, too. They removed his dusty boots, when he sat down momentarily, just before he was admitted to the throne room, and exchanged them for a fresh, newly made pair, which would not soil the exquisitely carpeted throne hall.

Biographers of Constantine Phaulkon, a unique actor on the Thai diplomatic stage in the 1680s, will find many new details about him in these documents, and will perhaps gain a few more insights into his character and the roles he played behind the scenes in government. The great caution with which he was treated by the Portuguese is a reflection not only of his domination in the ceremonial aspects of diplomacy but also fear of his power and influence over King Narai. The Macanese were already aware in 1683 of Phaulkon's influence at court, but Siqueira did not learn, until he arrived, the extent to which Phaulkon had taken charge of all diplomatic relations and maritime trade in his rapid rise to power.

Readers will find it difficult to navigate through this book, because the introductory documents have all been placed near the end of the volume, and there is no introduction to the Siqueira mission. Instead, the author-transcriber provides a brief biography of Siqueira (who was born in Macau, married into a well-to-do merchant family and died there in 1703), a description of Macau in the seventeenth century and an abbreviated history from the founding of Ayutthaya to the founding of Bangkok, with highlights of Portuguese-Thai relations. These essays can be read in any order, as they do not comment on the embassy or the transcriptions. The appended documents from the archives in Portugal (in particular the viceroy's instructions) provide a helpful introduction to the mission and its purposes, and are the best starting point for the reader.

Forty-five manuscripts are included, eighteen of which are short letters or messages incorporated by Fragozo into his descriptive report. In most letters, the writer's name appears at the end, but the addressee's identity can be ascertained only by internal evidence in the text, plus a little guesswork. An identification at the beginning of each document by a subject header ought to have been added, together with a table of contents to identify the individual texts.

The annotations in the 2003 Portuguese edition are concerned with the poor condition of the manuscript. They have been omitted in the English edition, leaving almost no annotations to guide the reader. Most of the Portuguese individuals mentioned in the Fragozo account are identified somewhere or other in this collection of documents, but there is no index to assist readers in this respect. A biographical glossary to identify at least the main characters would have been very helpful, especially for individuals who are frequently mentioned not by name but by title.

The book contains many details about social organisation and institutions common to Portuguese settlements in Asia. Among them are the head of community (appointed by the viceroy in Goa), another official (likewise appointed by the viceroy) responsible for the affairs of resident-traders while they were away on trading ventures, the administration of Portuguese civil justice to Portuguese nationals residing in Ayutthaya, the provident fund for orphans of deceased Portuguese and the local ecclesiastical

hierarchy. Some of the appended letters reveal the multiple (and independent) channels through which the vice-regal court in Goa received information about Thai affairs and was able to evaluate reports such as Fragozo's. The Portuguese community in Ayutthaya has not been studied extensively, even though it may have been as populous as the one at Macau, and these documents provide much information about this subject that will be useful to historians of Thailand.

Kennon Breazeale

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Direk Jayanama, *Thailand and World War II*, revised English edition, edited by Jane Keyes. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2008, xxxiv+566 pp., Bt 995 ISBN 978-974-9511-33-6

Direk Jayanama was a leading figure in Thai public affairs in the 1930s and 1940s. He hailed from a family that was already prominent in public service, and has since become even more so. After a brilliant early career as a lawyer, he joined the People's Party shortly before the 1932 revolution, and became a member of parliament afterwards. From 1938 to 1947, he was a minister almost continuously, mostly either in foreign affairs or finance, except for a twenty-month stint as ambassador in Tokyo. In 1947, he was appointed ambassador in London, but resigned a few months later as a result of the Phibunite coup. He then taught law at Thammasat University, and wrote texts on diplomacy and foreign affairs.

This voluminous memoir was published in Thai in 1966, only a few months before the author's death. A decade later, Sulak Sivaraksa oversaw a project to translate the memoir into English, and persuaded Jane Keyes to serve as editor. When she fell seriously ill, a decision was taken to publish the manuscript, even though it was then only work-in-progress. The memoir has since become a key source for historians of Thailand's role in the war. Jane Keyes was finally able to complete her editing work for a second edition, planned to mark Direk's centenary in 2005, but a little delayed.

This second edition does not contain any significant new material omitted from the first English-language edition of 1978. The earlier edition was "incomplete" in the sense that the editing work was unfinished. Some of the sentences were a little creaky. The text was littered with bracketed insertions which the reader was not sure were the work of the author or editor. This revised edition is much smoother and much clearer. The text reads so well that the reader soon forgets that this is not an English-language original. The editor's insertions in the text are clearly defined. In addition, Silkworm Books has put the text into a professional layout which is much easier on the eye than the makeshift presentation of the first edition.

The revision was a job worth doing, and a job well done.

The value of Direk's memoir lies in its level of detail. While holding public office, he kept a very full diary, and while writing the memoir he consulted the documentary record. As a principle, he determined to write only on events which he truly knew: "Throughout the book I have adhered strictly to the principle of describing only those events which I had first-hand knowledge of or evidence about."

Direk's account is especially good on the Franco-Thai conflict of 1940; the invasion by Japan in 1941; the delicate relationship with Japan over 1942-3; financial affairs in the immediate post-war period; and the negotiations to rehabilitate Thailand with the Allied Powers, including becoming a member of the United Nations.

In order to widen the coverage beyond his own personal view, Direk invited three colleagues to write essays on their personal experiences. This was a brilliant idea, and two of the three essays have rightly become classics. Thawi Bunyaket contributed an account of 8 December 1941, the day of the Japanese invasion, from his vantage point as secretary of the Council of Ministers. Puey Ungphakorn wrote a delightful narrative of being parachuted into Thailand as a Free Thai undercover agent. Prasop Sukhum described a mission to India in 1945 to persuade the US to treat Thailand sympathetically in the aftermath of the war.

The memoir includes a 170-page appendix of documents, mostly treaties and international agreements over the period 1940-47. Jane Keyes' footnotes identify people and places mentioned in the text, and provide background information on key events.

Few of the major figures in Thai public life have written their memoirs, and even fewer have been rendered into English. As a result this is a rare and valuable book that will have lasting value, both as a source for historians and as an appealing account of a fascinating period. It is good that everybody involved, including Sulak Sivaraksa, Jane Keyes, the Jayanama family, Silkworm Books, and the Jim Thompson Foundation (which provided financial support), thought it worth bringing out this second and completed edition.

Chris Baker

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Anders Poulsen, *Childbirth and Tradition in Northeast Thailand: Forty years of cultural development and change*. Copenhagen, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2007, xvii+267 pp., NIAS monographs #109, ISBN 978877690034.

This is a richly detailed account of an anthropologist's 40-year relationship with the people of a northeastern Thai village. Anders Poulsen first visited Phraan Muean village in 1961 as part of a multidisciplinary UNESCO team investigating village life in Thailand. His self-described main purpose is the systematic documentation of north-eastern Thai traditions and knowledge related to childbirth in English. Yet the value of these four decades of scholarship on Isan village life far exceeds his modest description.

Dr Poulsen's book is a meticulous report of change over time in Baan Phraan Muean village, and of the behavioral and cultural response of the villagers. This work has broad relevance for helping us understand the psychological impacts of social change, and learn how to mitigate their harm, particularly as the pace of change quickens and reaches into previously remote areas.

The design and visual appeal of the book captivates the reader and opens a fascinating window on Thai village life. Illustrations include the author's own black and white photographs taken over a period from 1961 to the present day, and photographs of the palm-leaf

manuscript of a common *khwan*, or life spirit rite, the *suukhwam maemaan*, the calling back of the fleeting soul.

Significantly, given the book's emphasis on the value of ritual in the care of body and soul, this village was the site of the social anthropologist S.J. Tambiah's studies of ritual, magic, and spirit cults in northeastern Thai Buddhism in the 1960s and 1970s. A powerful lens has been focused on Baan Phraan Muean for nearly half a century. The village is a microcosm of global change that can teach us how to weigh more accurately the gains and losses of development. The longitudinal and detailed approach reported here represents a major contribution to scholarship that has relevance for many disciplinary fields.

Several introductory sections establish the historical context of the research, and highlight the universality of themes that emerged within the longitudinal perspective, including a foreword by the UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific, the author's foreword, and the editor's introduction. Part 1 draws attention to the vulnerability of village cultural practices as a result of environmental, demographic, and political change. The book reminds us that preserving ritual is a way of protecting the identity and self-determination of vulnerable, disadvantaged groups.

Chapter 1 provides a general introduction to village life on Thailand's Khorat plateau, and the change that has come to the region with development. Dr Poulsen chronicles known changes

such as the shift from barter to a cash economy, and lesser known trends that counter stereotypes of Isan village life, notably the evidence of good coordination and civic planning in the village, and a gradual shift away from the Buddhist temple towards the community center as the locus of village life.

Chapter 2 details *khwan* rites and their importance, not only to pregnancy and childbirth, but to the general well-being or quality of life. These practices have analogies in Western psychotherapeutic theories and practices, notably the fleeting, multifaceted *khwan*, the life spirit that sometimes gets away, and the psychoanalytic concept of ego fragmentation. Ritual is also important because it addresses mind-body dynamics, a gap in healthcare that is gaining attention in the West in fields as diverse as oncology and the prevention of domestic violence. Dr Poulsen constructively sums up research needs in the region, including specific details of knowledge gaps, and he poses questions that will stimulate and guide future researchers.

Chapters 3-6 chronicle changes in village practice from 1961-2005, focusing on ritual and other practice concerning pregnancy and birth, confinement, and care of the young baby, respectively. This report documents the shrinking pool of people, mostly men, with detailed knowledge of the meaning of rituals, and provides comparative data on ritual use from people young and old, village midwives, and ritual experts.

In these chapters, Dr Poulsen discusses the evolution of and decline in ritual

surrounding pregnancy and childbirth. Importantly, the study demonstrates that this decline is partly due to improved access to healthcare, including prenatal care and sterilization. Chapter 5, The Confinement, includes a detailed discussion of the widespread *yuu fai*, or fire bed ritual, for an odd number of days after delivery. Incredibly, given the ubiquity of this practice in northeast Thailand, science knows little of the ritual's intent, or its health effects on mother and child.

Part 2 provides an introduction to the ritual texts, photographs of the original palm-leaf manuscripts of the *suukhwam maemaan* rite, and detailed renditions of that rite, as well as the *taengkaem maemaan* and *taengkae mae kamlerd* rites in Thai and English. There are briefer treatments of several smaller rites, including relevant magic spells and recipes for herbal decoctions.

Part 2 provides depth and texture that enriches the book and distinguishes it from others in the field. Dr Poulsen's compassion and respect for Isan people are evident throughout. I would have appreciated more page headers in this section. I was hesitant to mark this beautiful and useful book. I have already used the glossary and the texts to clarify and specify information obtained from my interviews in Isan villages, but I found myself getting lost in this section.

Part 3, the book's information-rich appendices, include a summary of the longitudinal research process, a guide to the Isan language and to pronunciation and transcription of ritual texts, an

appendix on poetic techniques in the ritual texts, an excellent glossary, and a focused review of the relevant literature. This comprehensive and detailed supporting information brings the village to life on the page.

My only substantive criticism of the book is that the research methodology that generated this wealth of information is relegated to an appendix. Although this decision probably stems from the fact that research took place over many years, was supported by a range of agencies, and is well-reported elsewhere, de-emphasis of the research process overlooks a valuable lesson in today's world. In an era of shrinking research budgets, coupled with greater crisis-fed recognition of the value of regional studies and social ecological approaches, this methodology offers a rare and wonderful model. I predict that Dr Poulsen's book will delight, inform, and inspire a wide range of readers in years to come.

Lisa M. Vandemark

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Michael J. Montesano and Patrick Jory, editors, *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula*. Singapore, National University of Singapore Press, 2008, xvii+413 pp., Paperback. ISBN 978-9971-69-411-1

On 17 July 2008 General Chettha Thanajaro of the Ruamjai Thai Chat Phatthana political party announced to the press that he had negotiated a ceasefire with insurgent organizations operating in the Thai southern states. The following day on national television, three alleged leaders of the Thailand United Southern Underground, representing eleven insurgent groups, were shown via satellite broadcast announcing a ceasefire that began on 14 July. One man in particular was identified as Malipeng Khan by General Anupong Paochinda, the Thai army chief. A week later, much to the embarrassment of the military leaders, the real Malipeng Khan issued a statement that the ceasefire announcement was false. In his statement, Khan emphasized that the people of Pattani are still fighting for independence from the Thai state. Khan was an active insurgent leader in the 1980s who last met with Thai officials in Cairo and Damascus in 1993–1994. Following General Chettha's publicity stunt, the Pattani United Liberation Front also issued a statement denying the ceasefire agreement.

This embarrassing event is symptomatic of two fundamental problems that surround the tense situation in Thai-

land's southern provinces. First, very little is known about the perpetrators of violence. Secondly, there is no credible leader or leaders, or any organization that the Thai state could negotiate with. Montesano and Jory's book is a bold attempt to suggest a framework to guide future research that may provide solutions to the southern issue. Their book purports to examine Thailand's southern problem from the local to the regional and then to the national level, standing conventional wisdom on its head. Essays in this volume establish baseline historical knowledge about this strife-torn sub-region of the Thai-Malay peninsula, and suggest that a long-term solution may lie in local understanding, local culture, and local identity that transcend Thai nationalism, religion and race.

Because the predominant discourse on the unrest in southern Thailand centers on the concept of the nation state, violent dissent and resistance from the periphery are invariably identified as threats to territorial integrity, one of the requisites of a *bona fide* state. And as this book shows, the Thai nationalist discourse is by its own nature an adversarial and tension-inducing one. This discourse elides harmonious historical (and contemporary) *modus vivendi* between the local multi-ethnic inhabitants. Montesano and Jory's book is thus a timely reminder that historical knowledge is still relevant and important, and that 'learning from history' is not merely an empty promise. In their introduction, they even remind us that

J.S. Furnivall's seminal study of the plural society published sixty years ago is still valid—we should study not just relationships between the ethnic sections, but differences within those sections themselves.

*Thai South and Malay North* grew out of a workshop held in 2004 that brought together a group of prominent scholars interested in the history of southern Thailand and northern Malaysia. The goal of the participants was to resituate the southern conflict in a broader local and regional perspective that will counterbalance and correct a state-centric view. The editors tell us that selecting papers for this book was not an easy task. They had to leave out many excellent essays submitted by the workshop participants in the process of making the book a manageable size. In the end, thirteen papers were selected, divided into four broad themes: Plural Historiographical Traditions; The Peninsula in the Age of Nation-States; Peninsular Chinese as Agents, Creoles and Mediators; Religious Pluralism and Competing Ethno-Nationalisms.

Part one sets the theme for the book in excellent and clear terms. Using historical records, the authors (Reid, Chuleeporn, Davisakd) demonstrate that the peninsular, as a crossroad for trade, has been for centuries ethnically diverse—historically, economically, politically, culturally and socially. And prior to colonialism, and even during colonialism, ethnic and religious differences were not necessarily divisive or contentious issues. Inhabitants of the peninsula have lived collaboratively

with each other and even shared a common identity. The essays in this section situate the local inhabitants in a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-religious 'peninsular world', and not in a sub-region of either the 'Malay world,' or the 'Siamese world.' In fact, the ebb and flow of influence and hegemony of the major mandala centers gave the region its rich hybrid identity.

Part two (Thanet, Ockey, Kobkua, Hack) focuses on how nationalism problematized regional identity. In particular, several articles highlighted Phibun's campaign to build a Thai nation state in the late 1930s which created distinctions between the Thai living in a Thai state and Others who needed to be assimilated. In this scenario, the Thai state targeted the Lao in Isan, the local Chinese, and to a much lesser degree, the Malay in the south. The Lao and Chinese were to be assimilated, but the Malay were to be absorbed into the Thai state as a minority group, to be overwhelmed by transmigration of Thais from the central and northeastern regions. It is during this period that the idea of Pattani as a historically independent nation was promoted as a means to resist rabid Thai nationalism. Prior to Phibun's hypernationalism, there was less ethnic and religious tension. In fact, the Islamic modernism championed by the now sainted Haji Sulong resonated with the modernism proposed by Pridi. However, those modernisms became unacceptable to the chauvinistic nationalism subsequently promoted by Phibun. But as Ockey and Kobkua show, there are still positive ways for local Malay Muslim

to participate meaningfully in the Thai state's political process by running for seats in parliament and by working in the Thai bureaucracy. These studies only show us that much more knowledge of local politics is needed.

The issue of local leadership takes on an unusual focus in part three. With the exception of perhaps Ockey's article, none of the essays in this volume provide a systematic in-depth study of local Thai or Malay leadership. Instead, three essays (Wong, Teo, and Montesano) give us rich information on Peranakan Chinese leaders, their achievements, and their interactions with other ethnic groups. By carefully studying Chinese business families and associations, the authors suggest that the Chinese can be seen as the exemplar of pragmatic, harmonious, and collaborative coexistence, crossing ethnic and political boundaries with ease. The essays seem to suggest that perhaps the agent of change can arise from this group. However, the premise that market forces and the role of Chinese business leaders as change agents in Thai politics may not work well in the southern provinces where the Malay Muslim population has not been part of, or benefited from, the region's recent economic prosperity.

Part four questions whether religious differences have been the root cause of tension and conflict in the region. The essays by Horstmann, Jory, and Johnson refute this received wisdom by showing that historically, Buddhists and Muslims have shown no sustained animosity based on religious belief or practice. In fact, cross-religious veneration of

spiritual leaders was, and still is common in the southern Thai and northern Malaysian regions. However, recent developments have made religious beliefs and practices more divergent: the adherents of Buddhism and Islam in the region have shifted religious allegiances from the local to the national, in the case of Buddhism, and to the international/global, in the case of Islam. Increasingly, pilgrimages by Thai Buddhists are mostly to religious shrines in Thailand. It is rare that religious tourism is to Sri Lanka or to Bodagaya in Bhutan. Thai Muslims, on the other hand, continue to go on the *Hadj* to Mecca which links them directly to international Islam and weakens already tenuous ties to the Thai state. And unlike the successful domestication of Thai Buddhism, attempts to nationalize Islam by the Thai state have been weak and ineffective. In particular, the state-appointed supreme Muslim religious leader, the Chularatchamontri, has predominantly been an ethnic Thai Muslim from Bangkok, and not a Malay Muslim from the four southern provinces. Attempts to make the Thai monarch the patron of all religions have been compromised by militant Buddhism that has claimed ownership of one of the pillars of Thai nationalism. In the eyes of the majority of Thais who are Buddhists, 'religion' in the trilogy of 'Nation, Religion, and King,' in fact, refers only to Buddhism. The problematic and sensitive issue of the Thai monarchy's historical and modern role as a unifying national symbol has been left out of this book. Recent attempts to reinsert a royal presence in the southern

provinces have become more difficult because of security considerations.

Without a doubt, this timely book has broad appeal, very refreshing to read, and the essays strike a chord on several registers. Importantly, the book suggests that we must downplay the distorting lens of Thai nationalism, and instead, we should re-situate the southern conflict in a discourse of the local context. The book also makes us more sensitive to the dearth of solid knowledge of the local leadership situation and suggests that studies of contemporary local Malay Muslim, Chinese and Thai community leaders and their relationships with each other and with the Thai state are urgently needed. The book also reminds us that the current conflict is not necessarily predetermined by primordial tensions, but that the historical record suggests areas of commonality and collaboration more so than areas of conflict and tension. Lastly, this volume is not only relevant to students and scholars of history, political science, cultural studies, etc., but it should also be required reading for decision makers who have been so overly focused on conflict and suppression that they have failed to explore areas of potential cooperation between the various groups of local stakeholders. In fact, a long lasting solution may indeed come from a bottom up view, rather than a top down one.

Thak Chaloemtiarana

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Martin Stuart-Fox, photographs by Steve Northrop, *Naga Cities of the Mekong: A guide to the temples, legends and history of Laos*. Singapore, Media Masters, 2006, 128 pp.

It will not only be discerning tourists who will welcome the publication of this lavishly illustrated book. Given the paucity of readily available literature on Laos, all with an interest in that country will find both pleasure and profit in this latest contribution from Martin Stuart-Fox with the valuable photographic accompaniment provided by Steve Northrop.

In choosing to focus on the three most important Laos cities along the Mekong, Martin Stuart-Fox has been able to present a rich offering of history, legend and folklore, and a measure of contemporary politics. Luang Phrabang, Vientiane (Viang Chan in this book's rendering of the toponym) are the more familiar of these cities, but the inclusion of Champasak is particularly welcome. The Champasak region, for it is a series of settlements rather than a single city, is often neglected in much of the general writing that focuses on the former 'Kingdom of a Million Elephants'. Now little more than a shadow of its former self, its previous centre has been eclipsed by nearby Pakse in terms of population and built environment. With its striking Vat Phu ruins, it seems certain that Champasak will attract much greater attention in the future.

Central to the book is the importance of the 'spirits of the river' for Lao settle-

ments along the Mekong. In the region's earliest times these 'snake-dragon' spirits varied in their character. Some were 'fierce and unpredictable, some more benign'. Called *ngeuak* by the first settlers, the knowledge that there were other, consistently benign spirits came to those dwelling along the river in the course of their interaction with Khmers and Mons and the assimilation of Buddhist mythology. These protective river spirits were the *naga*, or *nak* in Laos, and their presence was, and is seen, as vital to the establishment and then to the well-being of the three cities that are the subject of this book.

In relation to each of the three 'Naga Cities' the author traces their history from legendary times to the present, giving due attention to the calendrical festivals that mark the year. The importance of individual *vats* is highlighted, with accompanying photographs to supplement commentary in the text. For many readers the section on Luang Phrabang will prove most interesting because of that city's heritage status and the resultant exclusion of modern construction from the buildings in the peninsula formed by the Mekong and Nam Khan Rivers.

Although Vientiane does not have the picturesque character of the old royal capital there are good arguments for the attention given to the modern aspect of the city in this book. Few would suggest that its buildings can match the charm of Luang Phrabang, but as the country's capital and the fact that one of Laos' greatest festivals takes place each year

at the That Luang stupa are among the many reasons for the attention the city receives. Moreover, it is instructive to contrast the modern buildings depicted in the book and which form so much of Vientiane's built environment with what is found further upstream.

Champasak is a very different site, or more correctly series of sites, from either Luang Phrabang or Vientiane. Only an independent kingdom for less than a century between 1713 and 1778, it is correctly described as at the heart of frontier region where intermingling between Laos and Khmer was important – though the Khmer links with Luang Phrabang should not be forgotten. The ruins of Vat Phu and their spectacular site draw an increasing number of visitors, but remarkably little has changed at the riverside settlement where the rulers of Champasak once lived. Not so Pakse, where Prince Boiun Oum's last hurrah consisted of the construction of an amazing wedding-cake-architecture palace which had not been completed when he fled the country. Now completed and refurbished as hotel, it is a bizarre link to former times.

As interest in the cities of Southeast Asia grow, it can be confidently expected that this book will continue to be consulted by both those making their first visit Laos and those who have the good fortune to return to this fascinating region.

Milton Osborne

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Vatthana Pholsena, *Post-War Laos. The Politics of Culture, History and Identity*. Singapore, ISEAS; Copenhagen, NIAS; Chiang Mai, Silkworm, 2006, xii+256 pp., map. ISBN 941-93619-3-8

The book begins by introducing the dual subject, firstly “the nationalist discourse of the post-socialist Lao state. More precisely, ...the ways the state is uttering its discourse of legitimization within a context of multi-ethnicity” (p. 6), and secondly, “the exploration of the sentiments of nationhood of men and women who belong to an ethnic minority group and who have been involved in the communist war and then the socialist project” (p.7).

Polsena in chapter two considers the possibility of “the awakening of ethnic identity in Colonial Laos”, and the disruptive impact of the French colonial administration which led to an increase in rebellions among some highland groups, exemplified by Kommadam’s armed resistance in the south.

The next chapter discusses the politics of identity in contemporary Laos. This can be internal, as illustrated by the old royalist divisions of Lao Lum (valley Lao), Lao Theung (Lao of the mountain slopes), and Lao Sung (mountain top Lao), now technically disallowed, but still widely used. Later in the book they are referred to as “a stroke of genius” since the terms suppressed “the pejorative nature and the racial connotations” attached to the colonial naming system (pp.154–5). The

relationship between Laos and Thailand is another consideration, with the “Lao authorities... wish[ing] to preserve and reinforce their country’s ‘unique’ image of authenticity and purity, so as to be distinct enough from Thailand’s...” (p.54). The revived role of Buddhism is also considered.

Chapter four deals with the supposed origins of the Lao people and the debates that arise from the felt need to seek an antiquity not always justified by the facts. Much attention is given to the views of Souneth and his archaeological investigations, and the apparent desire to establish the existence of a pre-Indian pre-Chinese civilization. As in any country, ethnicity is a rather sensitive issue, as can be seen in world politics, and also, given the pre-1975 Lao experience, the subject of bitter debate.

Two chapters, five and seven, are straightforward field research pieces based on the south, and so not necessarily representative of the rest of the country; one considers a (former) “heroic village”, where conflict and divisions can be seen among people “supposedly all united against a common enemy”, and where the mentality of “secrecy and paranoia” remain (p.141). The other considers the fallen condition (“re-marginalization”) of formerly high status quasi-urban persons confronted with new realities and government priorities. Chapter six, “Ethnic classification and mapping nationhood” deals in extenso with the problems of ethnic classification and the various modifications to the ethnic sub-categories which appeared in

the different censuses. The imposition of ethnic names never previously used by those obliged to use them is a curious by-product of this attempt at rigid classification.

The brief conclusion notes that “the question of identity and culture is closely tied to the issue of overcoming ‘backwardness’”. In a country where more than half the population was born after 1975, the old imperatives mean little to young people today.

Political scientists will appreciate the introductory and closing sections to this work, as well as much of the text, heavily larded with the jargon and theory of the discipline. This is a book about political mechanisms, and it examines how they operate not only from the top down but also at the local level and from the perspectives of members of an ethnic group, when a more relaxed style prevails.

This book is well-crafted, solidly reasoned, and highly recommended for those interested in things Lao, and of course subject to sharp debate whenever it touches the core of what constitutes a country made up of a mosaic of ethnicities, perhaps with more than any other country in the world, constituting its social fabric, while the modest size of country calls for prudence when it is compared to its immediate neighbors.

Mayoury Ngaosrivathana

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Sao Sanda, *The Moon Princess - Memories of the Shan States*. Bangkok, River Books, 2008, 310 pp., 162 b/w illustrations, paperback, ISBN 978 974 9863 37 4

*The Moon Princess* is a poignant story told by Sao Sanda, a Shan princess who grew up in the principality of Yawngwhe where her father was the ruling prince (*saopha*). The history of her family can be traced back over six hundred years, and the history of the Shan for at least two centuries longer. The Shan call themselves Tai as they are ethnically and linguistically closer to the Thai, the Lao and Dai than to the Burmese, who are said to have given them the name Shan. As Sao Sanda argues, the Tai of the Shan States are not one of numerous 'tribes', as described by outsiders, but a settled people with a unique culture, its roots in Theravada Buddhism, spirit religion (animism), and wetland rice cultivation. Their language is part of the Tai linguistic group, they have distinctive scripts, a body of literature and performing arts, and classifiable arts and crafts. Now part of the Union of Burma (Myanmar), the people continue to struggle for independence from the Burmese military dictatorship.

This book complements a growing body of knowledge about the Shan States and Sao Sanda presents the world of her childhood with a light touch. She inhabited a land where tigers and panthers roamed the forests, and she was free to wander through the teak halls of

the royal palace, to observe the comings and goings of courtiers, British colonial officials, and villagers with petitions, all seeking an audience with her father. Among the many visitors to the palace in the 1930s were Colonel Green of the Burma Rifles, and Mrs Green, later to leave their important collection of Shan and Burmese artefacts to Brighton Museum on the south coast of England.

Sao Sanda lived in a polygamous household with complex, and sometimes tense relationships. The apartments in the southern wing of the palace were described as the 'women's domain' where she was pampered by her female relatives. There they prepared for the numerous Buddhist festivals held throughout the year, sewing silk robes for the Buddha images and concocting delicious food dishes served on emerald green banana leaves. The festivals, some of them involving colourful barges rowed across Inle Lake, gave an opportunity to enjoy theatrical performances and puppet shows, to visit medicine men with their exotic potions, and for some, to join the gaming tables.

This world changed dramatically in 1942 when Japan entered the Second World War and occupied the Shan States. Sao Sanda and some of her relatives took refuge in the villages near Inle Lake and her father trod a difficult path in dealing with the Japanese. As the Allies fought back, bombs fell on Yawngwhe and she, like millions of people around the world, took to the bomb shelters. With peace came the winding

down of the British Empire, the signing of the Panglong Agreement in 1947, the creation of the Union of Burma, and the controversial Clause 201 of the Constitution that gave the Shan the right to secede after ten years. It is the failure to implement the promises of Clause 201 that remains at the centre of most protest meetings by the Shan in exile.

In 1947 Sao Sanda left Yawngwhe to complete her education in England, first at school and then at Girton College, Cambridge. As the daughter of the first President of Burma, she led a charmed life with other Burmese and Shan students of her class, and with distinguished western Buddhists, including her future husband Peter, with whom she had many exciting adventures. They travelled through Laos in the 1950s at a time when few people were prepared to make such unpredictable journeys, and they made an epic trip by Land Rover from England via Europe and the Middle East to India and on to Nepal. Obviously intending to spend the rest of their lives in Southeast Asia, they returned to Rangoon and from there made visits to the Yawngwhe palace to be reunited with members of the family. Sao Sanda worked as a newsreader for the Burma Broadcasting Service but, as she admits, she misjudged the severity of political and economic tensions in Burma. Included in the struggle were Shan politicians, agitating for stronger representation and financial aid. For Sao Sanda and her husband, life continued, with interesting work and a busy social life, but eventually it became obvious

that tensions were reaching breaking point.

In March 1962 Sao Sanda was working in Laos when news reached her that her father had been taken into custody by the Burmese regime. Her brother Myee Myee was killed when troops stormed the palace. The first president of Burma ended up in the infamous Insein prison where he died in mysterious circumstances. Other Shan princes were also detained or disappeared, their relatives never learning the circumstances of their arrest and capture. The author chooses to end her life story with these tragic events, although there are brief glimpses of later adventures in Laos, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong and Oman. The book has a final section reflecting on Burmese politics since 1947. Sao Sanda discusses the policies that have led to centralised government, strictly controlled by the Burmese military with neglect of the Shan and other non-Burman peoples. This includes the suppression of their language and culture. The plight of her family is typical of so many Shan families, some remaining but many seeking a new life overseas.

The early part of this book is an interesting historical record of the Shan States, well illustrated with black and white photographs. Sao Sanda recalls wild animals roaming the forests, even though their body parts were sought for local medicines and charms. Now the forest trees have been felled and, as villagers will tell you, the roar of the tiger is no longer heard. Many of

the Shan palaces belonging to her relatives have been destroyed or are in poor repair although the Yawngwhe palace has survived and is now a museum. Tourists flock to see the Buddhist festivals around Inle Lake that were part of her childhood and this book provides excellent background reading for those interested in a fascinating people and culture, suppressed in the current political climate.

Susan Conway

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Penny Edwards, *Cambodge, The Cultivation of a Nation, 1860–1945* (first revised edition). Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2008, viii+349 pp. Paperback ISBN 978-974-9511-39-8

The very title of Penny Edwards' book is a telling stroke; the use of the alien, French name of the country underscores her central contention that the Cambodian nation was invented—or cultivated—during the colonial era. The book itself does not disappoint after so auspicious a title. A real tour de force, beautifully written and crafted, it reflects the author's vast knowledge of Cambodian history and culture. Hardly a word is superfluous in a dense text marvellously compressed into a scant 250 pages excluding the end materials. Edwards' scholarship is meticulous and her book is based on a huge collection of French and Khmer archival, literary and periodical sources. The book is packed with pithy aphorisms, fascinating details and keen insights. One observation that springs readily to mind is the line, "Whereas Marx had set out to turn all peasants into citizens, Saloth Sar [Pol Pot] was determined to turn all citizens into peasants." (If Marx set Hegel on his feet, Pol Pot has kicked the feet from under Marx, one might add) Edwards is also keenly aware of Edward Said's strictures against "Orientalism". It is refreshing that she allows the Khmers to speak through her translations, such as when the poet Suttanprijā In writes of the peasants conscripted by the French for restoration work at Angkor:

Coolies are hired as labor  
Chopping wood and hauling stone  
slabs to and fro  
...seeing our Khmer race as coolies  
I am overcome with pity for the  
Khmer race, dirt poor,  
Working as coolies for somebody  
else's money.  
I watch their bodies, frail and flat-  
bellied  
Hair thick with dust and grime,  
stinking like otters.

The Khmers in the Angkor of the colonial period were invisible—even edited out of the illustrations to Henri Mouhot's posthumously-published book on the ruins, as Edwards tells us. Yet while the French physically appropriated the monuments and incorporated them as a central part of their discourse on colonialism (and misunderstood their original purpose) the modern Khmers themselves took over that body of ideas and gave it a nationalist twist. My old teacher David Chandler often drew attention to the fact that the towers of Angkor Wat have featured on all Cambodian flags since independence. "What," he would ask, "is the significance of this?" Some students shrugged: wasn't it obvious, given Angkor's cultural and political significance for the Khmer people? Nationalist politicians might have given similar answers. Penny Edwards' book is a marvellous riposte to such uncritical and ahistorical thinking. For many Khmers in the early period of the tricolour, it was a pile of

old stones, but they came to see it as the central symbol of a newly-minted sense of nationhood. The myth became so pervasive that, as Edwards puts it, “The hypnotic appeal of Angkor Vat as a sacred symbol uniting Khmers in time and space has seduced some observers of modern Cambodian history into accepting nationalist myth as historical fact.” Moreover, she continues, “The dominant paradigm of Khmer national sentiment as a primordial continuum linking pre- and post-colonial Cambodia is a shibboleth.”

Given our familiarity with Benedict Anderson’s idea of the nation as an “imagined community”, there is nothing startling in such observations. Some nation states were literally invented: Belgium, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Iraq, for example. The political act of creation was preceded by cultural invention, and this was also the case in long-established states recasting themselves as cultural-ethnic entities. Thus as Eric Hobsbawm tells us, the Lowland Scots appropriated and even invented the symbols of Highland culture in their bid to create a nation, and Jewish nationalists revived a dead language. Cambodia is not Scotland or the Eastern European ghetto, however, and while Edwards takes Anderson and Hobsbawm as her point of departure, she has adapted and enriched their ideas in this highly original study.

Cambodian nationalism, Edwards explains, was produced by the colonial encounter of Khmers and French. Again, the idea of Europe providing

new models is not new in itself: Marx argued that colonialism inadvertently acted as its own gravedigger by providing Asian revolutionaries with the intellectual ammunition of nationalism, democracy and socialism. But again, this is a generalisation, and generalisations notoriously fail to illuminate the specific circumstances of social and political phenomena. Marx, of course, stressed politics and economics in such processes. In Cambodia, as Edwards acknowledges, the growth of nationalism was partly a result of resentment against repression, economic exploitation and a stunted educational system. However, she argues, this has led to historians being preoccupied with the “political manifestations of nationalism as opposed to the cultural context”. Indeed she insists that the nationalists did not produce a culture, but rather it produced them. That culture itself resulted from the complex interrelationships between the French colonialists and the Khmer colonised. Without agreeing to sideline politics and economics, we should concede that it is necessary to bend the stick back in the direction to which Edwards points if we are to understand the richness and complexity of the historical processes which led to the Cambodian nation.

The book comprises nine chapters. As a history of ideas it is not strictly chronological, with the chapters concentrating on themes. There are three chapters on Angkor and three on Buddhism, interleaved with three more chapters on what she describes as “more urbane

themes” of literature and politics. The chapters on Angkor in particular are superb, and contain fascinating details probably unknown even to specialists. As she shows, too, the example of Angkor led the French to create a hybrid “national style of architecture”, particularly in the capital, Phnom Penh. For the French, the Khmers were a “decadent” people, whose glory days were in the long-vanished past. Their role, as they saw it, was to preserve that past, whether it be manifested in art and crafts, religion, music, high art, the plastic arts, or ceremony. Thus, Edwards shows how the funeral rites of Ang Duong were much less elaborate than those of Norodom, despite the latter being a figurehead and the former the last reasonably sovereign ruler of the country. French scholars and erudite administrators also played key roles in the production of *Khmerité*—“Khmer-ness”. One she examines in some detail is the polymath Suzanne Karpelès, who played a key role in the establishment of the Buddhist Institute and the National Library. In the process of establishing Buddhism as a textual religion and excluding popular strains with their provenance in Hinduism and animism, Karpelès helped establish a national religion – a crucial ingredient in the cement of the newly created nation.

The outcome of the French period was the creation of the idea of a Khmer nation, and of a nationalist ideology which eventually turned on France. It did not have to be a historically tenable discourse, but it presented a triumphalist

vision of the past that was seamless and simple to understand: Cambodia was the inheritor of two thousand years or more of unbroken history and culture. In September 1938, Edwards records, a *Nagaravatta* editorialist claimed that Angkor had been built “to demonstrate to the great power of the Khmers in the world, both to the West and to neighboring countries (like Tonkin).” It was pretty poor history, but it illustrates the great hold that the newly created national myths had on the Cambodian literati, and which were to percolate in coming years to the rest of the people.

John Tully

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Anne Ruth Hansen, *How to Behave: Buddhism and Modernity in Colonial Cambodia, 1860-1930*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2008, x+254 pp., ISBN-13: 978-974-9511-40-4

Until five years ago our only western language sources for the history of Buddhism in Cambodia were Adhémard Leclère's pioneering, though problematic, *Le buddhisme au Cambodge* (1899) and the unique work of François Bizot into local traditions of esoteric practice. With scholarly interest in Cambodia largely focused either on the civilization of Angkor or the Democratic Kampuchea period (1975–79) it is refreshing to discover a new generation of researchers, many of whom were drawn to Cambodia by the humanitarian relief efforts that followed the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime, making major contributions to the study of Cambodian Buddhism in the modern era. Thus, to John Marston and Elizabeth Guthrie's edited collection, *History, Buddhism, and New Religious Movements in Cambodia* (2004), Penny Edwards *Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation, 1860-1945* (2006) and Ian Harris *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice* (2005), all of which were originally published by the University of Hawaii press, we can now Anne Hansen's study on the origins of Buddhism modernism

This book began life as a doctoral dissertation on Ukñā Suttantapriṣā Ind, largely known today as the author of

*Gatilok* (Ways of the World), an influential work published in the 1920s. Covering developments from the death of king Ang Duong to the triumph of Buddhist modernism in Cambodia, expressed through the inauguration of the Buddhist Institute by the French colonial authorities at the beginning of the 1930s, Hansen gives detailed consideration to a period roughly corresponding with the careers of Ind and Ven. Mahā Vimaladharm Thong, the inspiration behind the New Dhamma (*dhamma thmey*) movement. Hansen's text sticks closely to the writings of prominent figures in the movement whose thought would do much to re-orient traditional religiosity in Cambodia. Her prime concern is to articulate the ways in which enduring Buddhist ethical values were reshaped and given fresh emphasis in new socio-political contexts evoked by the positive and negative aspects of French colonial presence.

The first chapter sets the scene by exploring the ethical perspectives in the pre-modern Buddhist tradition. While accepting the fact that "traditional" Buddhism was never 'a singular or static vision' (p.23) Hansen provides a sound survey of relevant materials from the Cambodian 'practical canon' – *Trai Bhūm*, *Jātaka* (Vessantara plus various non-canonical materials) and *Paṭhamasambodhi* – with special attention given to the two wheels of *dhamma* theory, plus intersecting concepts of merit, power and kingship. This is followed by a discussion of the major socio-cultural shifts that took place in

nineteenth century Cambodia as a result of French, Vietnamese and Thai influences. The discussion here is especially oriented around the emergence of print culture, the colonial [re-]creation of Phnom Penh as the nation's capital and its role as a new 'translocal' centre of Buddhist intellectual activity, and the recurring phenomenon of millennialism.

Chapter 3 covers the rise of Buddhism modernism in the region, with special emphasis on the manner in which the religious reforms of Rama IV impacted on the sizeable community of Cambodian monks who, for over a century, were travelling to Bangkok in search of higher Buddhist education. The reforming spirit was subsequently imported back into Cambodia where it seems to have merged with a parallel current connected to the enlightenment discourse on religion. The melding of these cultural flows helped to stimulate an indigenous attempt to excavate the fundamental truths of Theravada Buddhism that were now deemed hidden beneath an avalanche of later accretions. Hansen identifies the most significant players in the Cambodian New Dhamma movement, many of whom (Chuon Nath, Huot Tath, etc) would go on to occupy the most senior positions in the ecclesiastical hierarchy in the period immediately after that which forms the basis of this survey.

By turning to the institutional innovations of the reformers Chapter 4 moves from the general to the particular. Hansen provides a nuanced account

of some of the influences and culture clashes behind flagship projects like the foundation of the Buddhist Institute, the mammoth effort required to create a Tripitaka translated into the national language, and the compilation of Chuon Nath's Cambodian Dictionary. All the while she is careful to show how the rapid move towards Pali-text puritanism represented both an erosion of previous models of learning and an opportunity to situate Buddhist ethics in novel contexts. The work concludes with a fair evaluation of the influence of the modernizers and by a 'commodus vicus of recirculation' we are finally led back to Ukñā Suttantapriṅgā Ind, a writer who did not feel constrained to confine his ethical observations to the merely personal. His condemnation of the 'dog's collar' (p.74) – a reference to the French policy of awarding *medailles* to suitably dutiful monks – is a clear sign that some of the figures discussed in this important study were happy to reformulate Buddhism in a more straightforwardly political manner.

The results of Hansen's research were originally published by the University of Hawaii Press (2007). This version is styled a first revised edition, although I cannot detect much evidence of revision. Fortunately the unrevised version was largely free of typographical errors but those that were present - Vimalapañña not Rimalapañña (p.102) – remain. My only mild grumble is that Hansen's training in the discipline of Buddhist studies has inclined her to transliterate Cambodian terms in Sanskritic terms.

Although this is a well-worn, EFEO-influenced path it is sometimes hellishly difficult to follow. Nevertheless, this is the most detailed account we have to date of the culture of Buddhist modernisation in Cambodia. Hansen introduces us to a variety of primary sources not previously encountered in western scholarship and draws judicious conclusions from their interpretation. As such, it is the basis upon which further useful research – it has certainly stimulated me to think a more about the precise mechanics by which Buddhist ideas travelled along the Bangkok-Phnom Penh axis in the first half of the twentieth century – might proceed.

Ian Harris

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Milton Osborne, *Phnom Penh: a Cultural and Literary History*. Oxford, Signal Books, 2008, xvi+232 pp., ill., index, ISBN 978-1-904955-40-5.

As a fledgling Australian diplomat in 1959 to 1961, Milton Osborne was posted to Phnom Penh. At the time, I was a fledgling American diplomat. Osborne and I overlapped in Cambodia for almost a year. In that far-off era, we both fell in love with a city that was then perhaps the prettiest in Southeast Asia. My memories of the place often came to mind as I read my old friend's deft and engaging book.

In his opening chapter, which follows an amiable foreword by William Shawcross, Osborne recalls what the city was like when we were both first there and sketches what happened in Cambodia at large between then and 2008. The next two chapters take us from the semi-mythical 'foundation' of the city in the 1400s (evidence suggests it was inhabited much earlier than this) through the Spanish and Portuguese intrusions of the 1590s until the eighteenth century when Cambodia passed off the radar screen, for Westerners at least, for over a hundred years.

Chapter Four, 'Royal City, Colonial City' (pp. 49–74), covers the first two decades of French 'protection' that began in 1863 with King Norodom's acquiescence and lasted for ninety years. When the French imposed their control, Cambodia's capital was upstream at Udong, but at French insistence Phnom Penh, which was better suited for com-

merce, became the capital in 1866.

The French developed the city more or less from scratch. In 2008, the north-eastern quadrant of the city, along with the kingdom's provincial capitals and Cambodia's road network, is probably France's most enduring legacy. Between the independence monument and Wat Phnom, dozens of gracious villas and a few mustard-coloured government buildings still give that part of the city an air of southern France. The Art Deco Central Market, built in the 1930s, is another souvenir of the colonial era, and so is the royal palace.

The chapters that cover the colonial period (pp. 79–123) form the centre-piece of Osborne's book. They are drawn from a range of sources including archives and travellers' accounts and are uniformly excellent. Osborne makes good use of the writings of such sojourners as Pierre Loti, Paul Claudel, Charlie Chaplin and Somerset Maugham. He also revisits French novels about Phnom Penh, and resuscitates several other books, probably best forgotten, that give us glimpses of the city when, as he puts it, it was (as it still is, for most travellers) a 'way station to the Angkor temples'.

Osborne calls the period 1939–1953 'the watershed years' because it was in this period that Cambodia entered a wider world, under pressure from the Second World War and the First Indo-China War (1946–1954). In 1953, the kingdom received its independence after some hard bargaining by Cambodia's young, Francophile monarch, Norodom Sihanouk (1922–). In exchange for

granting independence, France retained its economic and cultural stake in the kingdom. Until the 1970s, French was Cambodia's official language.

In Chapter 8 (pp.12–140), which Osborne calls 'Sihanouk Time' we learn that Sihanouk abdicated the throne in 1955 to become an 'ordinary citizen'. He formed a political movement, the Sangkum (literally 'Society') that dominated Cambodian politics for the next fifteen years. Osborne, who has written a biography of the prince, condenses a crowded era into seventeen adroitly written pages and conveys Sihanouk's charm, as well as his ruthlessness, while recognizing with hindsight that for Phnom Penh as well as for the prince, his country and the people he called his 'children', tragedy was just around the corner. The chapter closes with what struck me an overly brief description of the Khmer Republic, which came to power following a bloodless coup against the prince in 1970. Osborne probably felt that he needed to reduce his description of these years (1970–1975) to allow space for the tsunami of the Khmer Rouge that he covers in Chapter 9 (pp.144–167). However, Chapter 10, 'Writing Obituaries for the Old Phnom Penh' (pp. 168–178), concentrates on Western writings about the city on the eve of the Khmer Rouge takeover, and might have fitted better had it come immediately after Chapter 8.

Chapter 9 is harrowing and clearly set out. The most important event in the city in this period was the forced evacuation of its entire population soon after the

Khmer Rouge victory on 17 April 1975. Perhaps as many as two million people, including hospital patients, were driven into the countryside in the hottest month of the year, because the Khmer Rouge had no way of feeding or administering them, and also, ideologically, because the Khmer Rouge leadership believed that all urban dwellers were enemies of the revolution, who just might redeem themselves by growing rice.

For the next three and a half years, Phnom Penh housed a skeleton administration, thousands of soldiers protecting the leadership, a few small factories and the regime's fearful interrogation center, known as S-21, where over 15,000 'enemies', nearly all of whom were innocent of the crimes they confessed to committing, were interrogated, tortured and put to death. Very little is known about conditions in Phnom Penh in the so-called Pol Pot period, but the leaders lived nicely, had excellent medical care (provided by the Chinese) while the rest of the population, with some regional variations, lived very poorly indeed.

Osborne describes the rebirth of Phnom Penh under the Vietnamese protectorate that followed the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in late 1978 and lasted until 1989.

Chapter 12, 'Today's City' (pp. 1956–212), covers the enormous changes in the city since Cambodia opened up to the wider world in the early 1990s. These have included air pollution, random bulldozing, horrific new mansions, shopping malls, unending traffic jams and most recently (unless the financial

crisis catches up with them) its first ungainly, inexplicable skyscrapers. Despite this battering, old and new friends of the city can still find areas of considerable charm, some of which – like the airport and Riverside Park – date from the past few years.

Milton Osborne writes skilfully about Phnom Penh's long history while managing to give readers a 'feel' for the city as it exists in 2008. For first-time visitors to Cambodia, *Phnom Penh* is highly recommended. For those of us who have lived in the city for any length of time, it's a reader's feast.

David Chandler

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Pratapaditya Pal, ed., *Buddhist Art: Form and Meaning*. Mumbai, Marg Publications, 2007, 132 pp., Rps. 2,500 (\$66). ISBN. 10: 81-85026-78-5

Most members of the Siam Society have come to know Marg Publications only recently, principally through the splendid collection of essays on Thai art now commonplace in libraries and bookshops in Bangkok (Robert L. Brown, ed., *Art from Thailand*, 1999). Begun by the late Mulk Raj Anand in Mumbai in 1946, Marg quickly rose as a leading voice in shaping the direction of Indian art history. The art of India remains the focus for Marg, but over the last decade or so the press has broadened its scope well outside the nation's borders. The long-time editorship of Dr Pratapaditya Pal, together with an outstanding design team in Mumbai, has assured the volumes a warm reception among academics, connoisseurs and collectors. This volume on Buddhist art was prompted by Pal's discovery of an unpublished essay by the great Indologist, the late Johanna Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw, tucked away in the files of the Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena, California, where Pal served for many years as curator of Asian art.

This volume casts a wide net over the entire Buddhist world, ranging from three essays devoted to the early Buddhist art of India to later wall painting traditions in Tibet. A number of the essays touch in one way or the other on issues relating to the art of Thailand, so this volume is of added interest to

readers of this journal. Society members are also urged to consult another favorable review of *Buddhist Art: Form and Meaning*, by Peter Skilling (*Orientalisms*, vol. 38/8, 2007, 102–103).

The three opening essays explore issues in early Indian art. Gautam Vajracharya has tackled no less a problem than the identification of the Buddha's *ushnisha*, translated variously as topknot, turban or cranial protuberance. While Buddhist literature describes the Buddha as a simple tonsured monk, the Buddha is of course at the same time endowed with special physical markings, the well-known *lakshanas*, which include the *ushnisha*. The author concludes that the *ushnisha* represents a modified royal coiffeur, but this still does not completely explain the clear rise, or bump, in the rear part of the cranium, a hallmark of the Buddha. The author argues that the Buddha was also never represented with a completely shaven head (as a monk), because in early Buddhist literature the "sight of a shaven person is inauspicious", based partially on the "enduring theory that that hair is vegetation and symbolizes fertility" (pp. 32–33). The association of fertility and the vegetal world (and do not forget sexuality) with Indian art has been a cliché since the study of Indian art began, and its cavalier application to anything to do with the sub-continent has often muddled our thinking, especially with respect to early Buddhist art. Nature indeed appears routinely as a significant backdrop in episodes of the Buddha's life, but its central purpose is

to demonstrate the miraculous rupture in nature's laws rather than to highlight fecundity and fertility. One example is the tree that Queen Maya holds when giving birth. The tree itself is not the focus but the fact that a branch deliberately and miraculously bent itself to reach her grasp at the moment Maya was to deliver, as the ancient texts inform us. The same notion is illustrated by the story of the twin trees of identical size that appear at the time of the Buddha's death. Another example describes how the Buddha caused a mango seed to grow instantly into a mighty tree, thereby impressing a king; such a miracle does not point to the fecundity of nature (or the sweetness of a mango) but to the Buddha's power. Such episodes number among hundreds, if not thousands, inside and outside canonical sources. It is therefore not nature per se that is elevated and venerated but rather that the empirical rules governing the universe are suspended in order to underscore the divine nature of the Buddha. Such intervention in the natural world extends even to the timing of earthquakes.

The symbolic role of hair is illustrated when the Buddha removed his splendid turban and severed his hair, signaling the break with his royal heritage. Buddhist monks, emulating the Buddha's tonsure, provided a stark contrast in ancient India to the Hindu ascetics with their disheveled locks. Indeed, the belittling of ascetics, their attire and deportment is a leitmotif in Buddhist literature, such as the Kashyapa brothers who are described as matted-hair ascetics

(see the Pali *Nidankatha*). The ascetic Sumedha who unfurled his long matted hair to Dipankara Buddha to bridge a muddy patch on the road is perhaps the most dramatic example of how early Buddhism highlighted the hairstyle of ascetics. The long, unkempt hair of ascetics was one of many contrasts with members of the *sangha*.

Van Lohuizen's essay explores two unusual iconographic features represented on a spectacular Kushan pillar from Mathura, now in the Norton Simon Museum, and how this iconography, by its rarity, bolsters the pillar's authenticity. One involves the monk Upavana who fans the Buddha at Kushinagara and the other, snakes, or *nagas*, entwined about a stupa drum, perhaps indicating the famous Ramagama stupa. Sonya Rhie Quintanilla focuses on the same pillar and convincingly demonstrates that it once belonged to a stupa found at Govindnagar, Mathura, and should date to the first century C.E. Her essay, which effortlessly moves between history, iconography and stylistic analysis, is a model.

Two of the essays focus on a snakehooded stone Buddha in the Norton Simon Museum that has been attributed to northeastern Thailand and to the ninth century. The theme is the snakeking Muchalinda who winds his coils about the Buddha seven times in order to protect the Buddha from various inclemencies. Only rarely in Buddhist art is the Buddha's body shown wrapped within the coils, and Pal illustrates a rare example from Gandhara (another

example may be the nineteenth century bronze image at Wat Suthat, Bangkok). The Norton Simon example follows the norm, with the snake heads represented above the Buddha. This same example is unusual, however, since it is depicted with only three heads rather than seven which is customary in mainland South-east Asia (another example with three heads is among the eighteenth century painting at Dambulla, Sri Lanka, where, incidentally, the coils conceal the lower half of the Buddha's body). Pal provides a perceptive review of the vast number of snake-hooded Buddhas in order to place the Norton Simon work into context. Joyanto Sen's article treats the same Muchalinda stone sculpture but more from a stylistic angle.

Hiram Woodward reminds of us of the complex and fluid religious setting of the Khmer world. His starting point is an inscribed standing Avalokiteshvara in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, which is compared to other examples, notably a tenth century stele in the Bangkok Museum. These works are related to two *sutras*, the *Karandavyuha* and *Mahavairochana*.

The last three essays range over issues in Himalayan art. Steven Kossak looks at the depiction of jewelleries, both in stone and painted examples, to determine their use as chronological guideposts. He delineates four stages, beginning in the eleventh century. Erberto Lo Bue explores two phases of Ladakhi painting. The earliest is marked by Kashmiri influence, while the second, following the fourteenth century, shows

a debt to Tibet, especially the Kagyu tradition in the sixteenth century. He has also identified the names of no less than six artists, based on painted inscriptions. The last essay is a personal reflection by Jaroslav Poncar, a photographer who has specialized on the Himalayas. He speaks of his experiences growing up in his native Czechoslovakia which contributed to his unique perspective from behind the camera. Panoramic views are his forte, a number of which appear here for the first time. He is at present a professor of physics in Cologne.

The superb layout of *Buddhist Art* encourages one to keep thumbing the pages to ever new delights. The scores of color and black-and-white photographs are crisp, with few exceptions. The rich deep red backgrounds in some of the *thankas* are even so luscious that the garlands of severed heads are scarcely noticed. There are approximately ten full-page color illustrations. One of the most dramatic is a wall painting from Miran, in the National Museum, Delhi, extending over two pages and boldly silhouetted against a stark white background. These nine essays provide an up-to-date look at many of the most provocative issues in the study of Buddhist art. The volume's wide scope offers a little of something for everyone.

Donald Stadtner

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Olga Dror, *Cult, Culture, and Authority: Princess Liễu Hạnh in Vietnamese History*. Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2007, xi+260 pp., cloth, \$56.00, ISBN: 078-0-8248-2972-8.

Olga Dror's *Cult, Culture and Authority: Princess Liễu Hạnh in Vietnamese History* is a significant contribution to Vietnamese historical and historiographical study. In it, Dror examines a noted female cultic figure, Liễu Hạnh, not primarily to determine her historical facticity, but rather to explore the ways in which successive generations of Vietnamese literati have depicted her. In addition, Dror is interested in examining what she sees as a considerable degree of continuity in efforts by successive Vietnamese states to manipulate and control cultic activity, seeking to exercise authority over the realm of popular belief and culture. The study is very much a literary and historiographical one in which Dror examines an array of significant Vietnamese literary and historical texts, attempting to understand their respective author's motives for offering differing depictions of Liễu Hạnh. As she notes, "Rather than bringing us closer to Liễu Hạnh, the stories written about her brings us closer to those who wrote the stories." (pp. 82–83) While perhaps a truism from a historiographical perspective, the point is an important one, and Dror's arguments regarding this historiographical process are convincing, even as some of them are highly speculative. Indeed, her work is a reminder of the often frustrating limits

to the historical paper trail that bedevils scholars of Vietnamese history. Yet Dror demonstrates that with some creativity, useful and provocative scholarship on less accessible aspects of Vietnamese history is possible.

The introductory chapter is an examination of the role of spirits and spirit cults in early Vietnamese society, and particularly as these attracted the attention of the Vietnamese state. It also provides a useful survey of the reasons for and mechanisms by which the state attempted to regulate the realm of the spirits and their worship. She shows how the state "bureaucratized" local spirits, seeking to place them under the umbrella of state authority, and thus effectively undercut their autonomy. Dror also offers compelling analysis of the two earliest Vietnamese compilations of tales about spirits, the *Việt Đình U Linh Tập* (Collection of Stories on the Spirits of the Departed in the Viet Realm), and the *Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái* (Wonders Plucked from the Dust of Ling Nam). Here she effectively uses these texts to demonstrate how tales about spirits and cults to these spirits were manipulated by their scholar compilers to serve the interests of the state, and sets the stage for her argument that the tales about Liễu Hạnh were similarly reworked to serve the agendas of particular political viewpoints.

The second chapter examines what evidence exists for the earliest emergence of the cult of Liễu Hạnh, considering the types of circumstances that might have contributed to the development of

this type of cult. She links the cult's appearance to the era of the Mạc dynasty in the second half of the sixteenth century, providing some intriguing speculation about the religious policy of that regime, and a possible connection between the cult's emergence and the fact that so many women were left at home as their husbands and brothers were being drafted into contending armed forces. The third chapter commences the historiographical analysis, which lies at the heart of this study, and looks carefully at three eighteenth and nineteenth-century accounts of the Liễu Hạnh story. Dror gives considerable attention to the account written by Đoàn Thị Điểm, who ranks as one of a handful of famed Vietnamese female writers of the pre-twentieth century period. Dror argues that it is Điểm's account, "Tales of the Vân Cát Goddess" that has become the essential Ur-text regarding Liễu Hạnh, and that it is generally regarded as the most reliable version of the story. Ironically, Dror argues that Điểm's telling of the story is not a simple legend or re-articulation of the cult story, but rather a complex narrative designed in part as Điểm's autobiography, as well as a critique of the Confucian-dominated society in which she grew up and lived. Perhaps not surprisingly, Điểm's account later sparked another round of revisions to Liễu Hạnh's story by male literati. Dror concludes the chapter by looking at two such revised tellings in which writers representing the Buddhist and Daoist establishments sought to lay claim

to Liễu Hạnh while at the same time reining in a cult focused on what they viewed as a threatening female figure.

Chapter four looks at the ways in which the tale of this efficacious female spirit was once again transmogrified in the nineteenth century, most notably at the hands of the scholar-official Nguyễn Công Trứ, and then later those of the historian Kiều Oánh Mậu. Here, as with Đoàn Thị Điểm, Dror offers useful biographical background to each man, situating them and their work in particular historical circumstances of the early and late nineteenth centuries respectively. She argues that Trứ sought to focus his telling on the divine and sublime nature of Princess Liễu Hạnh, while the later Mậu, living through the stark realities of French colonialism, emphasized her potentialities as an agent of resistance who could rescue the newly imagined nation. In a concluding chapter, Dror brings the story to the modern period, examining the changing fortunes of Vietnamese spirit cults in general and that of Liễu Hạnh more particularly. She traces the attitudes of the French, and later the independent Vietnamese regimes towards popular spirit cults and beliefs, arguing for a tension between state authorities who viewed these cults either as "superstition" or "culture." She shows how the fortunes of these cults faded, particularly during the war and the immediate post-war years of the 1950s through 1980s, and then describes a revival of the Liễu Hạnh cult in the *đổi mới* era after 1986, in which the temples were refurbished,

people were allowed to attend them unimpeded, and the state sought to capitalize on the tourist potential manifested by these and other “cultural” rituals.

Given the relative paucity of materials with which to work, Dror, like most good historians of earlier Vietnam, carefully assesses what is available, and attempts to extract plausible interpretations from them. While narrowly an examination of the emergence and evolution of a particular Vietnamese cult, her interpretative approaches are ones that offer new ways of thinking about other issues and other texts in Vietnamese history. This book makes contributions on numerous levels. It offers the most detailed English-language examination to date of a particular popular spirit cult, tracing its historical antecedents in compelling fashion. It also gives us a powerful case study of the ways in which popular cultural systems interacted with the Vietnamese state and its representatives across the centuries. The particulars of this important dynamic are too often neglected in the scholarship, and Dror does a very good job of highlighting it. The book also ranges across the multiple belief systems that have historically been found across Vietnamese society: Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and spirit cults, and historicizes their interactions, overlaps and contestations in a nuanced way that goes well beyond the vague truisms that often dominate historians’ comment on these religious forces.

In particular, Dror’s notion of the Liễu Hạnh cult as a kind of vessel into which different types of content are placed, is noteworthy. It not only creates the framework for the book, but is an important insight that gives pause to scholars who misguidedly try to ascribe particular authenticities to popular cultural practices. Dror also demonstrates one of the more intriguing patterns linking Vietnamese literary and popular culture, namely the ways in which there is an ongoing circulation of tales between the oral and written realms. She shows how existing tales are recorded, then are transmitted, often orally, only later once again to be recorded as “oral” tradition. This complex process is critical for understanding the evolution of Vietnamese cultural lore, and Dror offers a very good case study demonstrating how this process functions.

There is something in this study for everyone, making it a distinctively rich work of scholarship, with much to offer the larger field of Vietnamese studies, whether one is interested in history, literary analysis, religion, or ethnographic research. The earlier sections are more compelling than the discussion of the cult’s turbulent path through the twentieth century, but all are worth reading. Moreover, while there are moments in which this ambitious work seems in danger of over-extending itself, and when the threads of the story line become rather thin, Dror skillfully maintains sufficient focus on the Liễu Hạnh cults as an effective lynchpin for the project. This book is a serious and important

contribution to scholarship on Vietnamese social and literary history, and will remain a significant point of reference for scholars for a long time to come.

George Dutton

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Philip Taylor, *Cham Muslims of The Mekong Delta, Place and Mobility in the Cosmopolitan Pheriphery*, NUS Press, National University of Singapore, Singapore, 2007, xv + 313 pp., ASAA Southeast Asia Publication Series, US\$25.00 | S\$38.00, paperback, ISBN: 978-9971-69-361-9

Within a few years following the end of the Cold War countries in Southeast Asia began to promote policies aimed at greater regional integration and more dynamic economic interaction among the peoples of the region. At the same time more and more scholars have put their efforts into studying ethnic minority groups along the border areas of the nation-states in the region and the activities that they are involved in. Broad questions on the relationship between the state and marginal peoples were deliberately asked. For example, what is the nature of relations between the core and periphery? How do some of these people on the periphery strike back at their marginalization, and why do some ethnic groups appear to more easily submit to the state's ideology?

Over the last five years the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) has annually awarded the Benda Prize for scholars who work on Southeast Asian issues. In 2005 the AAS awarded the prize to Andrew Hardy for his book, *Red Hill: Migrants and the State in the Highlands of Vietnam*, and in 2007 the prize went to Eric Tagliacozzo for his study, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a South-*

*east Asian Frontier; 1865-1915*. Both of these works deal with migration and transborder activities. Recently, an edited volume by Michael Montesano and Patrick Jory, *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula*, also focuses on cross-border interaction, this time between different ethnic groups in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia. Philip Taylor's recent study of the Cham can also be categorized as belonging to this same, increasingly popular scholarly field.

Taylor's argument in this book is based on two factors which he argues have shaped Cham people identity: first, their Islamic identity as embedded in everyday practices; and second, the Cham people's economic activities and trans-border trade amongst the Cham themselves and with other ethnic groups. Taylor's method of observing both religious practice and trade activities makes his work different from the other studies mentioned above.

In the changing socio-economic conditions of the Mekong delta how have the Cham people adjusted themselves to the new context of a market-oriented system? If considered from a conventional framework the Cham people appear totally disadvantaged when compared with other ethnic groups in the Mekong delta. This work seeks to understand the interactions between the ethnic Cham and the socialist state in the market sphere. Taylor has examined Islam and everyday practices and economic activities in order to understand the way the Cham people negotiate and

assert their identity.

The book is divided into six chapters: Chapter 1, "In Search of Autonomous Origins", investigates the literature and history of the Cham people; Chapter 2, "Islam in the Production of Cham Localities", looks at how Islam has been used as the foundation in constituting Cham Muslim communities; Chapter 3, "Spirits of Community, Personhood and Place", explores non-Islamic practices among the Cham people; Chapter 4, "Market Access: The Economy in Local Perspective", investigates Cham economic life; Chapter 5, "Place in Motion, Culture in Process: Cham Histories of Trade", examines two other important factors besides Islam and economic activities: the geographical setting and cultural differences with other ethnic groups in Mekong region; Chapter 6, "Cham Political Agency" examines the Cham's political identity.

The government of Vietnam uses the mythology of the southward movement of the Vietnamese people to legitimize the control of the central government in Hanoi over the Mekong delta region and the dominant role of Vietnamese people in many economic sectors.

In Vietnam the Cham people exhibit numerous occupational differences from the ethnic Vietnamese (Kinh). Most of the Cham people are rural-dwellers and work in labor-intensive industries such as agriculture, fisheries, and cross-border trade. By contrast, the more profitable trade in the modern economy is dominated by the ethnic Kinh and Chinese in the urban areas of the

Mekong delta.

In southern Vietnam the Cham people use Islam as a global religious identity to link themselves to members of Islamic communities around the world, especially the Cham people living abroad and the Malays, whose language is part of the same language family as that of the Cham.

Taylor's work may contribute to a better understanding of the role that Islam plays both as an identity and as an ideology that can be mobilized in opposition to state ideology. Here there is a clear comparison that can be made to the role of Islam in the three provinces of southern Thailand. Another similarity is that as border-dwellers the Cham people in southern Vietnam also use their geographic advantage to interact with people and ideologies beyond the Vietnamese frontier. Taylor's findings from his study of the Cham may help scholars to understand the dynamics between the ethnic Malays and the Thai state in southern Thailand.

Although Islamic identity has the potential of being exploited to oppose state authority and ideology, both in neighbouring Thailand and in the Philippines, the armed conflict and violence comes from ethnic friction between the Muslim minority and the Buddhist or Catholic majority. However, Taylor's focus on the economic life of the Cham people may be of assistance to scholars studying the economic activities of the Malay people in Thailand's three southern provinces, particularly in comparing how this minority utilizes cross-border

trade between Thailand and Malaysia to strengthen both its Islamic and ethnic minority identity vis-à-vis the intrusion of the Buddhist majority embedded in government development ideology and practice.

However, in his book Taylor does not try to judge the role of Islam as an element of armed resistance or separatism. His findings points out that the Vietnam government has carried out a modernizing project in the Mekong delta by providing basic infrastructure and carrying out the economic transformation from socialism to capitalism based on the market-oriented economic system. As a result the Cham people with their predominantly subsistence economy now appear more “uncivilized” compared with the dominant Vietnamese people.

In his conclusion Taylor discusses the migration of the Cham from their rural areas, which have been transformed and modernised through government projects into urban areas for the purpose of getting jobs or accessing higher education. One of the significant outcomes from the Cham people’s migration into the urban areas has been to decrease the friction between the Cham people and the state.

This book is strongly recommended for people who have an interest in Islamic movements in Southeast Asia (especially in the mainland area). It should be recommended reading for academics and development agencies who work in the areas of ethnicity, economic

development, religious issues, politics and anthropology.

Amnuayvit Thitibordin

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G. L. Balk, F. van Dijk, D.J. Kortlang, F.S. Gaastra, H.E. Niemeijer, P. Koenders, *The Archives of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Local Institutions in Batavia (Jakarta)*. Leiden, Brill, 2007, 572 pp., 16 color ills. ISBN 978 90 04 16365 2

The *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC), known in English as the Dutch East India Company, was the world's first multinational, founded by Dutch traders and burghers in 1602. It was the largest and most organized of the early modern European trading companies operating in the East. Its activities spread from the Cape of Good Hope to Japan and the Indonesian spices islands. During its two centuries' existence, the Company not only transported goods between Asia and Europe, but also helped exchange knowledge and mutual perceptions between the two continents. Its highly bureaucratic organization left us with at least 25 million pages of records containing data on political, economic, social, cultural and environmental conditions of the places and peoples the Company's men came into contact with. With kilometers of documents which had survived centuries of physical challenges, the VOC also surpasses its contemporary rivals in its capacity of the producer of historical sources. The VOC archives are deservedly included in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

In 1619 the VOC captured Jaccatra and turned this Javanese town into its administrative center in Asia with

a new name, Batavia, present-day Jakarta. The Jakarta collection is one of the VOC archives around the globe; the others are kept in Sri Lanka (Colombo), India (Madras/Chennai), South Africa (Cape Town), Malaysia (Melaka) and The Netherlands (The Hague). For the most important collection at The Netherlands' National Archive (*Het Nationaal Archief*, NA) in The Hague, an extensive inventory has been published as *The Archives of the Dutch East India Company, 1602–1795 (The Hague: Sdu, 1992)*. Following its example, the present volume is the fruit of the co-operation from 2001 to 2006 between the National Archive of the Republic of Indonesia (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 'ANRI') and the Dutch National Archive within the framework of the TANAP (Towards a New Age of Partnership) program. The aim was to 'improve the accessibility and the physical condition of the archives (in Jakarta) created by the Dutch East India Company and the Netherlands Indies Government' (p. 9).

The book can be divided into two parts. The first consists of articles which provide essential information about the origin, significance and structure of the archives. These introductory articles are presented in three languages: English, Indonesian and Dutch. The second part comprises the inventories of the documents, all in the Dutch language; therefore it is specifically for researchers with a knowledge of the Dutch language.

The opening article by the prominent VOC expert, Femme Gaastra, explain-

ing the 'Organization of the VOC' at home and in Asia, is almost identical to that in the previously-mentioned 1992 volume. Hendrik E. Niemeijer elucidates the 'Central Administration of the VOC Government and the Local Institutions of Batavia (1619–1811)'. This article is the key to understanding the background of the administrative units of the VOC in Batavia which produced the archives assembled in this volume: the High Government, the High Commission, the General Audit Office, the Court of Justice, the College of Aldermen, the District Council, the Orphan Chamber, the Board of Matrimonial Affairs and Minor Court Cases, Notaries, the Trustees for the Deceased Estates of Chinese and other non-Christian Bereaved, the Batavian Loan-Bank, the Opium Society and Directorate, the Reformed Church Council, and the Poor Relief Board, plus the Nicolaas Engelhard Collection. These archives contain various types of documents concerning the Company and the city of Batavia, such as resolutions of the High Government, daily recording of matters relating to trade, politics and local affairs, accounts of income and expenditure, records of court cases and criminal verdicts, banking records, civil rolls, personal wills, records of public work, and many more. This demonstrates that Batavia was a European-ordered city in Asia and a state in itself, with a strong bureaucracy.

The 'History of the Archives' by G. L. Balk, F. van Dijk and D. J. Kortlang gives details of the attempts over time

to organize the archives and to compile the inventories. Very helpful are the directions for the users of the archives, which contains suggestions how to start and pursue research, for example about the VOC personnel. The list of literature about the VOC is not extensive, but comprehensive enough (covering major areas of the Company's operations) and updated from the 1992 volume. Included here are also some interesting illustrations, especially those of the documents in Javanese, Arabic and Chinese.

The VOC archives in Jakarta are invaluable sources for researchers who are interested in the subjects related to the period and activities of the VOC as well as Asian histories of the early modern time (seen through the eyes of the Europeans). Since researchers will find the richness of the archive materials, quantity- and quality-wise, both inspiring and overwhelming, the inventories constitute a good preparation for actual work with the records kept in the ANRI. While the archives become more accessible, other obstacles still remain, notably the seventeenth and eighteenth century Dutch language forms and convoluted scripts. From this reviewer's first-hand experience, both can be overcome with some guidance in language training and paleography – and perseverance. The results of the quest through the VOC archives are more often than not gratifying.

Besides its main function as the guide to the VOC archives in Jakarta, the introductory articles of this book can well serve as a short introduction into the

history of the VOC and Jakarta during Dutch rule for non-experts. This book fulfils the requirements of UNESCO's Memory of the World program, which is 'to preserve the endangered memory of humanity recorded, (...) while ensuring the widest possible access (...) for researchers and the general public.'

Bhawan Ruangsilp

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Greg Bankoff and Sandra Swart with Peter Boomgaard, William Clarence-Smith, Bernice de Jong-Boers and Dhiravat na Pombejra, *Breeds of Empire: The 'Invention' of the Horse in Southeast Asia and Southern Africa 1500-1950*. Copenhagen, NIAS Press, 2007, viii+263 pp., paperback, ISBN 9788776940218

Greg Bankoff and Sandra Swart, the principle authors of *Breeds of Empire: The 'Invention of the Horse in Southeast Asia and Southern Africa 1500-1950*, have shone a light into an important, but what they contend is a largely overlooked, connection between the horse and the expansion of trading and political empires. As they note, 'This collection of essays reassesses the variety of ways in which animals—in this case, horses—were utilised and conceived of on the periphery of empire.' Continuing in this vein they make the point that studies involving the interaction between humans and animals 'is now a growing academic field' (2).

Certainly in the realm of horse racing, for example, there are many works about the lives and deeds of the turfs greatest champions. As an example, *Seabiscuit* (by Laura Hillenbrand), the story of a great American racehorse of the 1930s, not only became a best-selling book it was also made into a Hollywood movie. In countries such as Britain and Australia there has been almost a tradition of producing books about great racehorses.

*Breeds of Empire* is divided into two sections. Part One, consisting of five chapters, deals with the trade in equids between Southeast Asia and southern Africa in the century or so prior to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Part Two, consisting of four chapters, covers the introduction of the horse to the Philippines and the importance of the animal in southern Africa from 1654 onwards.

The authors note that horses 'were highly significant in the economies and societies of the nineteenth century Indian Ocean and South China Sea. Horses were central to many forms of warfare, whether for cavalry, mounted infantry, field artillery, or the baggage train. They were also extensively employed for urban transport...' (22) South African horses became a wanted item in India from 1812 onwards after achieving success on the racetrack in Calcutta. The Indian Mutiny of 1857 saw the trade in South African horses peak with over 5,000 animals brought to the sub-continent in the succeeding four years.

As the chapters show, the trade in horses encompassed most of the areas bounded by the Indian Ocean rim and into the western Pacific. South Africa exported to India; Burma exported to Northeastern India and Malaya; the Philippines also sent horses to India; while Indonesian horses came into Malaya.

The chief interest in this book for readers based in Thailand comes in Chapter 5: 'Javanese Horses for the

Court of Ayutthaya'. This section is written by Dhiravat na Pombejra, a recently retired history lecturer at Chulalongkorn University whose speciality is seventeenth and eighteenth century Siam.

He notes horses were highly regarded by Ayutthayan monarchs and their courts. This was despite the lands surrounding Ayutthaya not being suitable for horses due to inundation in the rainy season, with transportation mainly by boat. Horses formed part of processions, and basic skills of horsemanship were required for young nobles during the seventeenth century. The animals were largely imported from Persia and Japan.

It is perhaps no real surprise to find evidence of a colour fixation among the Siamese court. There were complaints about the lack of quality of Persian horses brought to Siam in 1696, possibly 'because they were of the wrong colour'. (77)

Dhiravat na Pombejra concentrates on the specifics of the horse trade between Java and Ayutthaya with especial emphasis on the key role played by the United (Dutch) East India Company (VOC). The VOC first established a trading station in Ayutthaya in 1608, six years after setting up their first base of operations in Java. By the middle of the seventeenth century the VOC was in firm control of much of Java by way of treaties with various rulers, and force of arms. The trade in Javanese horses began during the reign of King Narai (1656–1688).

Dhiravat na Pombejra suggests 'around 900 horses were sent to Siam from Java during the 1686–1735 period...' (80) At least 598 of these were sent during the 24-year reign of King Thaisa which encompassed the years 1709 to 1733. These figures, he stresses, are difficult to confirm 'because data on horses *bought* on Java and horses *sent* to Siam appear separately in the various scattered documents.' (80)

Taking the figures at face value, simple mathematics suggests the numbers of Javanese horses being purchased amount to about one animal per month during the period 1686–1708 and 1734–1735. Even during the reign of King Thaisa the number of horses purchased per month number a little over two. The Javanese trade certainly makes an interesting footnote, but it was hardly substantial.

In their conclusion, Bankoff and Swart attempt to put the case for a more concentrated study of the horse as an individual and separate entity, contending that current 'historiographical channels perpetuate the orientalisation of animals in disallowing non-human creatures their own history.' (153) They link the failure of a specialised '*horse-story*' (154) to what they claim is the norm for most historians to focus on the 'distorting mirror of imperial historiography' (154). They believe applying a level of scrutiny to the role of the horse in the Indonesian archipelago, Thailand, the Philippines, and southern Africa 'another trajectory starts to suggest itself.' (154)

*Breeds of Empire* is a worthy addition to that body of scholarship interested in uncovering and expanding the secluded minutiae of history. The authors are concerned the horse has been reduced, because of its domestication, to a level of invisibility within the general framework of history. While this may be true to a large extent, surely without the intervention of man the horse would have remained just another wild animal whose role in the history of nations and people would have been reduced to that of an important, but essentially dependent, footnote. Humankind has taken the horse, adapted it by way of breeding and usage, and turned it into, arguably, the most important creature in the growth of empires and expansion of trade in the world. A *horse-story* in isolation would be just another *Animal Planet* special.

Duncan Stearn

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Lee Hock Guan and Leo Suryadinata, eds, *Language, Nation and Development in Southeast Asia*. Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007, xvii+229 pp., paperback, ISBN 978-981-230-482-7.

This book is an outcome of the workshop entitled 'National Language Policy and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia' held at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, in 2003. The book encompasses chapters on language policy in the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam. The issues of language policy in Laos, Cambodia, and Brunei Darussalam were left out because of the unavailability of contributors.

On the whole, the book is an important contribution to the study of language policy and nation-building in Southeast Asia, as it gives detailed information and discussion on the issue in each of the seven countries considered. While most countries are represented in one chapter each that covers the chronological process and debates on language policy, the very complicated situations in the Philippines and Indonesia are each presented in two chapters, each by a different contributor who has a different focus. What makes the book particularly useful are Wang Gungwu's introduction, giving the humanistic touch of a scholar who is at the receiving end of language policies, and the concluding chapter on 'Vietnam Language and Media Policy in the Service of Deterritorialized Nation-

building' by Ashley Carruthers. While the former opens the debates that follow in the subsequent chapters, the latter looks beyond the physical territory of the nation, here to the Vietnamese diaspora around the world, which seems to imply a new dimension to the issues of language policies and nation-building.

The introductory chapter by the two editors gives a clear objective of the workshop and overview of the book. In the post-colonial period, Southeast Asian nation-building has centered around one national language 'supposedly' learned and used by all the different ethnic and/or linguistic groups. The factors that determine the chosen language are not limited to the socio-political situations of each nation, but include its economic position as well as its state of development. How the selected language is used to promote the nation's political ideology and economic gains even beyond its physical territory has also become an object of concern, as apparent in the case of the government in Vietnam promoting the language among the Viet diaspora.

Theraphan Luangthongkum in her chapter on 'The Positions of Non-Thai Languages in Thailand' gives a precise picture of the unbalanced ratio between the number of nations and linguistic groups in Southeast Asia: 'There are only a few Southeast Asian countries, but each country comprises several ethnic groups. As a result, both cultural diversity and linguistic diversity are natural.' (p.181) To handle peoples with such diversified and different linguistic

and cultural backgrounds, each nation in the region resorts to different measures based on their colonial background and the outcome of the power struggle within the nation. Each policy, however appears to change from time to time due to shifts in power, competition among people from different linguistic backgrounds, and/or the economic concerns at a given time.

The first two chapters cover the complicated language policy and nation-building in the Philippines. While Andrew Gonzalez gives a chronological description of the situations, T. Ruanni F. Tupas discusses in detail the debates among various social classes and powerful groups in the country over the issue of Tagalog/Filipino and English as a national language and medium of instruction. Placing these two chapters at the beginning of the book is logical as the Philippines seems to be the nation in the region where most of the language policy issues and complications have occurred, ranging from nationalism and the search for one's own identity to the competition among ethnic groups with different linguistic backgrounds, the choice of English as a national language and medium of instruction for its being a 'neutral language' as well as an international one, and the issue of social classes and the access to English-medium education. Given that the country's economy relies heavily on financial inflows from migrant workers, an adequate proficiency in English is especially important as it contributes to Filipino migrant workers being highly marketable abroad.

The next two chapters cover the situations in Indonesia, a country where a minority language, naming Malay, was chosen as the national language during the independence movement and which retains its prestigious status. Like the first two chapters, Lucy R. Montolalu and Leo Suryadinata give a chronological description of the language policy and nation-building in Indonesia, while Melani Budianta focuses on the role of Indonesian literature in nation-building. This adds a humanistic dimension to the book, as well as portraying a clear picture of how healthy the linguistic situation in Indonesia is. A country with a rich and diversified culture with a long history, Indonesia's literary scene is extremely active and embraces the introduction of new genres and language uses. Budianta rightly concludes that; 'This is not a linguistic weakness, but a cultural desire to negotiate between the diverse cultures and language in the global-national-local traffic. This anxiety is precisely what keeps Indonesian language and literature dynamically moving and obstinately diverse.....In this diversified market and in this openness for cross-cultural traffic and plurality lies the future of the multicultural Indonesian literature, where the future of Indonesia as a nation-state will be continuously imagined.' (p.70) This linguistic phenomenon in Indonesia is a good example of the stable and healthy existence of the 'Unity in Diversity' in one of the most a multicultural society in the region, if not the world.

In chapter five, Eugene K.B. Tan discusses the question in Singapore where English and Mandarin, both being non-native languages of most first generation Chinese Singaporeans, are promoted as official languages alongside Malay and Tamil, due heavily on their importance and status in world economy. Unlike other nations in the region, the language policy in Singapore also requires students to learn what the government calls 'mother tongue', a category that is not based upon conventional linguistic grounds, but more on family. The chapter also discusses the status of the other Chinese languages, the native languages of most first-generation Chinese Singaporeans, and Singlish, a local variant of English that binds all Singaporeans together, the use of which is not encouraged. Tan's chapter gives a clear picture of how instrumental a language policy is regarded in the economic development of a nation.

Lee Hock Guan's chapter on 'Politics, Development and Language Policy in Malaysia' focuses on the ups and downs of the status of English and Chinese as the media of instruction. The re-introduction of English as a medium of instruction for science and technical subjects, and the re-invigoration of the status and function of Chinese in Malaysia is an apparent evidence of how globalization and economics have ultimately determined language policy in a country, by-passing the internal competition between different linguistic groups and power houses.

Kyaw Yin Hlaing's chapter on the 'Politics of Language Policy in Myanmar' discusses how Burmese, the language of the Burmans who constitute the majority ethnic group in Myanmar, has been utilized by both the government and the various ethnic groups with different linguistic backgrounds. It is ironic that while the government instituted Burmese as the official language of the country as an action to assert its power over the other ethnic groups, those groups who are from different linguistic backgrounds also found Burmese a useful and convenient medium in their anti-government communication among each another. The new role of English as the language of modernization in the view of the government, and as a neutral language in the view of Burmese activists based outside Burma, is also informatively discussed.

In chapter 8, Theraphan Luangthongkham describes the language hierarchy in Thailand where Standard Thai is at the top of the hierarchy, followed by regional Thai languages/dialects, and minority languages. The roles of various foreign languages the Thais have been in contact with are also described. This chapter is full of information and statistics, with little discussion, as the linguistic situation in Thailand seems to contribute to social stability, suggesting that the Thais know when to use which language, resulting in a linguistically peaceful society.

As mentioned earlier, Ashley Caruther's chapter on Vietnamese forms a perfect closure of the book, as it takes

the issue of language policy to another level, i.e. beyond the physical territory of a single country. It also makes a linguistic connection between Southeast Asia and the other regions, showing how a government, driven by its economic concerns, tries to extend its linguistic control over the 'assumed citizens' beyond its physical state. However, while this chapter is a fine contribution to the book in presenting the role of Vietnamese in the contemporary world, the part of the book dealing with Vietnam proper would have been more interesting and informative if there had been a chapter before this presenting and discussing the language policy in Vietnam from the pre-colonial to the post-Vietnam war period. Readers would then see the bigger picture of the complicated linguistic situations in Vietnam where foreign languages like Chinese, French, and English, as well as various Vietnamese dialects and minority languages have taken their turn in shaping the language policy along the country's long history.

While the book is a rich resource for those who are interested in learning more about how language is used in nation-building and development in Southeast Asia, as its title suggests, the drawback of the book (and the workshop) is obvious. When discussing in detail how language is used for political purposes, the workshop organizers should have also invited some linguists and language acquisition specialists to give their expert contributions to the workshop (and hopefully to the lan-

guage policy-makers as well). It seems in all the chapters that each government in the region regards language merely as a tool and neglects its intrinsic value. A language seems to be useful only when it can help the government maintain its power, as in the case of the Philippines, Malaysia and Myanmar, unite the different groups in the movement against the previous colonial government as in Indonesia, and achieve economic gain and prosperity as in Singapore (and, in fact, the rest of the countries in the region). No government seems to have resorted to inputs of linguists concerning the linguistic value of any given language, be it from the aspect of historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, psychological linguistics, or applied linguistics. It has always been the case that people who know some languages but not much 'about' languages made a decision about which language to be used or imposed on a country's population that usually comprises diversified ethnic groups with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Lack of knowledge about language acquisition has also resulted in a lack of success in the study of foreign languages in most countries, or in achieving limited success below the desired level. Instead of seeking advice from those who are in the discipline, governments usually blame a scapegoat, as in the case of non-Mandarin Chinese languages and Singlish in Singapore. Local wisdom that can be efficiently passed along from generation to generation through a mother tongue (in the conventional

linguistic definition) gets lost when that mother tongue is not encouraged to be used any more. Inefficient methods of foreign language teaching and learning unnecessarily slow down the language acquisition and as a result also slow down or obstruct the economic gain that governments have aimed for. Any country with a population that cannot call any language its own, and real, mother tongue is also likely to face a perpetual identity crisis.

Titima Suthiwan

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Christopher R. Duncan, editor, *Civilizing the Margins, Southeast Asian Government Policies for the Development of Minorities*. Singapore, National University of Singapore Press, 2008, xx+284 pp., paperback, ISBN 978-9971-69-418-0.

*Civilizing the Margins* is a collection of papers that began as the panel 'Legislating Modernity among the Marginalized: Southeast Asian Government Programs for Developing Minority Ethnic Groups' at the American Anthropological Association meetings in 1998. In the process of putting the volume together some participants were unable to contribute and other authors were recruited to cover the national landscape (pp. vii). This edition is a reprint of the volume that was initially published by Cornell University Press in 2004. It includes all the original chapters as well as Duncan's new, brief introduction that updates information on government policies from 2004–2007 (pp. ix–xx) and a bibliography of recent publications on government policies and ethnic minorities in Southeast Asia (pp. 271–275).

In a review of limited length, it is not possible to provide detailed discussions of each chapter. Instead an overview of the topics and issues is presented. The chapters are well written and readable and the photographs are well chosen. The maps of the countries and regions discussed within the countries provide useful information and help orient readers who are not experts in Southeast Asia.

This volume's strength is its broad coverage of the region; it provides useful overviews for all the countries of Southeast Asia except Brunei, Timor Leste and Singapore (these get a brief mention in Duncan's new introduction). The volume begins with Duncan's general overview on modernity, development, government policies, and indigenous ethnic minorities and includes chapters on Malaysia (Endicott and Dentan); Philippines (Eder and McKenna); Indonesia (Duncan); Burma (Lambrecht); Viet Nam (McElwee); Laos (Ovesen); and Cambodia (Ovesen and Trankell).

The authors have set themselves the difficult task to provide both accounts of government policies and the ways in which the policies have affected particular peoples. All of the authors are anthropologists, except Lambrecht, who is a political scientist. Within the confines of a chapter limited to twenty-five or thirty pages, it is practically impossible to provide sufficient detail on both government policies and the ways in which they have been applied, and also provide meaningful ethnographic accounts of the how these policies have affected particular ethnic groups. One complicating factor for all these presentations is that there are many different minority peoples within each country. Authors had to choose between writing about particular peoples and illuminating the impact policies in this particular instance and lose any sense of the overall affects, or writing about the impact of these policies at such a

general level that they lose any sense of the variation in the consequences these policies actually have.

All the chapters provide accounts of government policies. Some focus on the ways in which these policies affect particular minorities: Duncan on the Forest Tobelo of Indonesia; Gillogly on Lisu in Thailand; and Ovesen on Hmong in Laos; while Ovesen and Trankell discuss three different minority groups in Cambodia, the Cham in some detail as well as briefer discussions of the Chinese and the upland groups. Others provide more detailed accounts of particular countries' policies and their histories and the ways in which they affect the minority groups in general; Endicott and Dentan on how Malay policies have affected the Orang Asli, the cover term for all of the indigenous peoples; Eder and McKenna on the Philippines and the divergent policies for indigenous cultural communities and Philippine Muslims; McElwee on indigenous minority groups in the highland areas of northern and central Vietnam; Lambrecht on Burma's border area development policies and how they serve to extend government control into the border region.

The balance depends on the authors and their interests and expertise as well as the situation in the particular countries being discussed. There is no one solution to this problem of balancing fine-grained understanding of government policies and the recognition of considerable ethnic diversity. Given that the nation state is the unit of analysis here, this tension is unavoidable. Con-

sequently there is some unevenness in the comparability of what is reported. However, it is a strength of the volume that the systematic discussion of government policies for 'civilizing the margins' lets us see regional patterns at the level of national governments.

Two themes stand out in all these chapters: resettlement and the environment. All of the governments have attempted to resettle indigenous ethnic minority peoples into more accessible areas and also resettle majority peoples into the ethnic minority areas. Regionally, all these governments have accepted the modernist view that permanent, orderly settlements are part of what it is to be civilized. Resettling majority peoples into minority areas provides 'civilized' role models for the minority peoples as well as relieving population pressure, notably in Indonesia, Philippines, and Viet Nam. The resettlement of majority populations also makes the area more productive, at least from the government's perspective. Neither sort of resettlement has been particularly successful. International and national concerns about the environment and environment degradation frame the indigenous ethnic minority peoples and their swidden agriculture as destroyers of nature and as threats to wildlife. And this in turn supports resettlement programmes. Although, as a number of the authors note, resettling majority peoples in the area does not help preserve the environment. Resettlement and the creation of forest reserves or protected areas makes it difficult for

the indigenous ethnic minority peoples to maintain their access to land and the other resources that they need for their lives and livelihood.

This volume's focus on government policies and the indigenous ethnic minority groups continues to reify the distinctions between populations. The separation of upland and lowland populations as two isolated and deeply different groups is a result of the same modernizing policies that came with colonization and continued into the independent modern nation states. Although the authors do discuss history, this tends to be limited to the nineteenth century with little awareness of the early relationships and interactions between governing centres and what have now come to be seen as isolated and marginal populations. This divide also tends to obscure the level of ethnic heterogeneity in what is taken to be the majority population. It also helps obscure the analysis of similar governmental civilizing and modernizing programs for the peasantry. Admittedly the indigenous ethnic minorities have the double handicap of being minorities and marginal. Nonetheless, the analytic separation of indigenous ethnic minorities from other groups continues to obscure the ways in which governments work to create national identities and control their populations.

Overall this book makes a valuable contribution to the study of the interaction of government policies, bureaucracies, bureaucrats, and various indigenous peoples. It provides a con-

cise and readable overview of the array of government policies for indigenous minority peoples in Southeast Asia. This coverage makes is useful for scholars of particular countries who want to place the particular policies and practices of their areas within the larger regional comparative framework. It is also accessible to people with little knowledge of Southeast Asia, making it useful for students interested in development and minority policies.

Nicola Tannenbaum

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Howard Federspiel, *Sultans, Shamans & Saints: Islam and Muslims in Southeast Asia*. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2008. 297 pp. ISBN 978-974-9511-41-1

When, ultimately, you gaze through  
the veils to how things really are,  
With great wonder you will say,  
again and again,  
'This is truly not what we thought  
it was!'

Rumi, *Mathnawi*

If it can be said that there have been any positive effects resulting from the terrible 11 September 2001 attacks on the US, and the death and destruction resulting from the 'War on Terror' which was declared following the attacks, one might point to the surge in interest in Islam and Muslim societies on the part of the general public, the media, as well as scholars outside the 'Muslim world'. While much of this interest inevitably has tended to focus on security issues and particularly the relationship between Islam and radicalism, nevertheless it is undeniable that there has also been a desire among non-Muslims to come to a better understanding of Islam and Muslim society. This demand has stimulated a growing supply of scholarship. In Southeast Asia, where Muslims make up almost half the region's population, and which includes the country with the world's largest population of Muslims (Indonesia), there has similarly been rapidly increasing attention given to the study of Islam.

Thailand is not an exception to this general trend. Scholarly interest since the 1990s in the ethnic and religious 'diversity' of Thailand's population, and the shock of the extreme violence in the southern border provinces since 2004, where separatist militants have resorted to a revolutionary 'Islamist' discourse, have combined to stimulate unprecedented interest in Islam. It is thus a welcome contribution to Southeast Asian Studies in Thailand that Silkworm Books has chosen to republish Howard Federspiel's *Sultans, Shamans & Saints: Islam and Muslims in Southeast Asia* in Thailand – the book was first published by University of Hawai'i Press in 2007. The book is part of this Thai publisher's growing list of publications on Southeast Asian Islam.

In Thailand it has to be admitted that until quite recently there has generally been far greater scholarly interest in Southeast Asia's Hindu-Buddhist tradition than in its equally significant Islamic heritage – for the obvious reason that superficially Hinduism / 'Brahmanism' and Buddhism appear to have a more organic relationship to Thailand's conception of its religious and cultural self. Yet at a time when Thailand's trade and economic interactions with neighbouring Muslim-majority countries is increasing, and its knowledge of its own Muslim minorities is rather minimal, it has to count as a 'good thing' that Thai scholars, students, and the general public are now beginning to gain a better understanding of the religion of almost half the population of the Southeast Asian region.

The author, Howard Federspiel, professor of political science at Ohio State University, is a well-known figure in the study of Islam in Southeast Asia. Like a not inconsiderable number of Western scholars in Southeast Asian Studies, Federspiel formerly worked in the US State Department. He received his PhD in Islamic Studies from Canada's McGill University, one of the Western world's foremost centres for the study of Islam – not just for Western researchers but also for a large number of influential Southeast Asian Muslim scholars. While Islam tends to be thought of as being exclusively oriented towards the Middle East, today there are multiple centres of Islamic scholarship contributing to the global discourse on Islam – the Middle East, South Asia, Europe and North America, and of course, Southeast Asia itself.

Federspiel's book is essentially a social and cultural history of the development of Islam in Southeast Asia. The book's emphasis is on the forms that Islam has taken as a lived religion in the unique environment of Southeast Asia – a multi-ethnic, multi-religious region, which had already been influenced by the great Indic religions outside the Abrahamic tradition prior to the coming of Islam. To this extent, Southeast Asian Islam has taken on distinctive forms when compared to Islam in the Middle East, particularly in the Arab lands, the place of Islam's origin. In setting out the principles that guided the writing of the book, Federspiel states that, 'This study operated on the basis of two premises:

(1) Islam is a dynamic religion that has been adapted to time and place by its followers and (2) Islam in any region can be measured for orthodoxy, not simply against the Middle East, but against the general norms of Islam throughout the world' (p. 3).

The book is divided into four chapters which correspond to successive historical periods, and a concluding thematic chapter that deals with historical institutions in Southeast Asian Islam. The four periods are: (i) The coming of Islam to Southeast Asia – from the earliest influences up to 1300 AD; (ii) the expansion of Islam in Southeast Asia and the 'emergence of a hybrid culture', which deals with the development of states under local Muslim rulers, and Islam's influence on and accommodation with existing traditions (1300–1800); (iii) the modernization of Muslim societies in Southeast Asia as a result of the challenges posed by colonialism and Western civilization, and the development of Islamic 'modernism' (1800–1945); and (iv) Islam in the era of nation-states, which covers the period in which Southeast Asian Muslim societies adjusted to a new political order dominated by indigenous elites who in general eschewed Islamic models, and the on-going accommodation of these societies with, and sometimes resistance to, a world dominated by Western political and intellectual paradigms (1945–2000).

As its title suggests, *Sultans, Shamans and Saints* is generally anthropological in tone, which will appeal to a reader-

ship that may be less interested in the specifics of Islamic law and theology – whose apparently stark and austere rulings seem out of keeping with the liberal, individualist inclination of today’s scholarly tastes. The book gives particular attention to custom and ritual, ceremony, religious practice, literature, art, and other cultural forms influenced by Islam, always emphasizing the practice of accommodation and negotiation with Southeast Asia’s reality of diversity. The presence of Islam and *Jawi* culture – the use of Malay written in Arabic script as a vernacular for the teaching and dissemination of Islam – is one of the things that gives a substantial part of the diverse Southeast Asia region some semblance of unity - what Feder-spiel refers to as the ‘Muslim Zone’.

*Sultans, Shamans and Saints: Islam and Muslims in Southeast Asia* is a welcome general introduction to the field of Islam in Southeast Asia. The book does not claim to offer a great number of new insights for specialists in Islamic Studies, for whom there is an existing literature. It covers the field of Muslim society in Southeast Asia with broad brush strokes rather than specific detail. However, it does map out the field in an accessible way for those who may be newcomers to the field of Islam in Southeast Asia, while providing a useful reference work for others.

The quote which began this review, from the thirteenth-century Sufi mystic poet Rumi, is taken from the beginning of this new book on Islam and Muslims in Southeast Asia. It is possible that

scholars and students new to the study of Islam in Southeast Asia who read the book, too, will discover that, ‘This is truly not what we thought it was!’

Patrick Jory

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