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

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

Malcolm Falkus

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Peter Jackson

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

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

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