

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