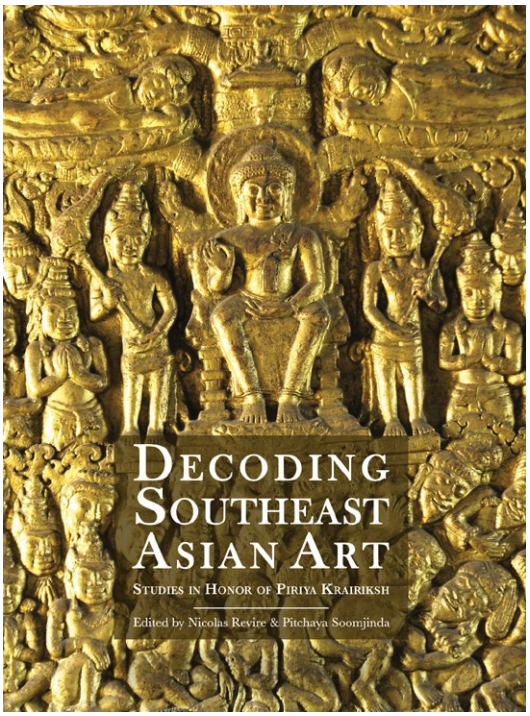
Nicolas Revire & Pitchaya Soomjinda, eds, *Decoding Southeast Asian Art: Studies in Honor of Piriya Krairiksh,* Bangkok: River Books, 2022, 424 pages, ฿2,200, ISBN 978-6164510661 (Hardback)



Decoding Southeast Asian Art is an ambitious and beautifully-produced compilation of 30 essays by Thai and Western scholars, including art historians, historians, religious studies specialists, and archeologists, among others. Spanning over 2,000 years of art and cultural history, this volume offers a comprehensive and multifaceted exploration of the region's artistic heritage. Given the challenges inherent in reviewing a collection of this magnitude, I focus on what this volume reveals about the current state of the field and its contributions to our understanding of Southeast Asian art.

The volume honors Dr Piriya Krairiksh, whose formidable, wide-ranging scholarship will be studied, mined for insights, and debated for years to come. Dr Piriya is known for rethinking and challenging old assumptions and many of the essays here follow his example. The results are often admirable and important, but, inevitably, sometimes less so. Some of the essays are welcome updates or expansions of the authors' earlier works.

While the title refers to Southeast Asia, most of the authors focus on Thailand. Some look at neighboring mainland countries; only a handful treat Indonesia. But connections with India (e.g., essays by Brown, Revire, and Lavy), China (Sharrock, Pimpraphai & Sng, Woodward), Persia (Listopad, Pimpraphai & Sng), and Europe (Listopad, Woodward, Supamon, Bautze) are frequently discussed, lending a welcome breadth of view. Also welcome are some authors' efforts to bring into the picture the wider worlds of Mahayana and tantric Buddhism (e.g., Sundström, Sharrock). In addition, a wide outlook appears in the consideration of the movement of people and objects through pilgrimage, trade, or other travel and exchange.

The best of the essays bring together art history, archeology, and history to draw attention to important but understudied topics or to shed new light on topics that have been studied for decades. The approaches vary widely. Some of the scholars focus on art objects, artifacts, and buildings in their materiality (Indorf & Reddy); some investigate iconography (Sundström, Sharrock, Chotima, Pitchaya); some emphasize theoretical concerns (Ong, McDaniel). Some wrestle with

https://doi.org/10.69486/112.2.2024.14

issues of dating and the reconstruction of original meanings (among them Pal, Revire, Lavy, Wannasarn, Baptiste); others investigate old and current political and social concerns (Wannasarn, Baker & Pasuk, Lefferts & Cort, Pattaratorn, Reynolds, Tayac).

All of this reflects, of course, the state of the field of Southeast Asian art studies. As an aside, it is worth noting that the field is endangered as Western institutions shrink area-studies programs and humanities and social sciences in general because of declining interest and funding. However, *Decoding* points up various sorts of good news for the field. In the last decade or two, old documents not previously known, or difficult to access, have been brought to light, published, or translated. Archeological discoveries, such as the Buddhist sculptures unearthed some years ago in Kampong Cham, Cambodia, discussed in Robert Brown's essay, though often modest, have added to our store of knowledge. Additionally, ruins have been cleared and photographed. Museums have made available the results of scientific analysis and testing of artifacts and artworks in their care and, sometimes, established testing methods have been applied to new sorts of materials; for example, bricks from historic structures have been submitted to thermoluminescence testing in the hope of narrowing the dating of their buildings or distinguishing repairs and additions from the original fabric (Wannasarn).

At the same time, various scholarly challenges the field has always faced are apparent in *Decoding*. Documentation is often maddeningly sparse. French records tell us how many partridges Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715) ate, not to speak of what his activities were every day, but for the reign of his older contemporary Prasat Thong of Ayutthaya (r. 1629–1656) only bits of contemporary Siamese documentation have come down to us and we are largely dependent on the accounts of foreigners. When various sorts of indigenous documents do survive, for example the inscriptions of Angkor or the chronicles of Ayutthaya, issues of interpretation can be daunting. If they were composed to glorify—or reinforce the legitimacy of—a monarch, it would be challenging and controversial to sort out fact from spin.

Relating art styles to political or religious trends is a worthwhile endeavor (Murphy), but a complex one. Might styles change fairly quickly in answer to the tastes or propaganda needs of a new dynasty or new monarch? Indeed, was the pace of artistic change usually smooth or could it be jerky, responding quickly to the demands of patrons or the intrusion of new ideas from imported art objects or even artists? And what of moments of archaism or revivalism, as discussed by Pierre Baptiste? Old objects and buildings were around and could be emulated centuries after their creation. Deborah Klimburg-Salter, in a recent lecture, made the point that in ancient Afghanistan sites and even objects that were once sacred continued to be sacred even through major religious and historical changes; this seems to have been true in Southeast Asia as well.

To focus on art objects, issues of dating always make the head ache. A temple is mentioned in a document, but we cannot always be sure what surviving structure or ruin a name

refers to. What about old repairs or remodeling? Both of these problems are discussed by Wannasarn (Saam) Noonsuk. For free-standing art objects multiple issues present themselves. Few such objects have inscribed dates, and few can be confidently linked to mentions in old documents to help with dating. For example, for the important reign of King Narai of Ayutthaya (r. 1656–1688), who is referred to multiple times in *Decoding*, few (dare I say zero?) dated buddha images or other sculptures are known.[1]

From at least the early 20th century, fakes have multiplied and are often of superb quality. Sometimes laboratory examination and testing (especially for bronzes) can assist in spotting them. But our best scientific techniques may not help much with sculptures of stone; obviously the issue is not when the stone was created, but when it was carved. Fakers follow every advance in lab analysis and testing and seek ways to foil scientists' best efforts. Add to this that numbers of objects and buildings may have survived only in a fragmentary state and may have been carelessly restored. Thus the challenges of using artworks as evidence—when little other evidence is available—are compounded.

Another complexity with art objects is that it may not be clear whether they were made locally or imported (Lorrillard) and, if imported, brought from where? Furthermore, Buddhist images often seem to have been copies or evocations of renowned or powerful older images, whether made locally or abroad.

This means that the authors of *Decoding*, when they discuss an artwork, must deal with matters of origin and authenticity (and of repair). They, and other scholars, may not always have had the opportunity to examine art objects in person; moreover, if the objects are in museums or private collections, the owners may or may not have subjected the objects to rigorous examination and testing. For such objects, only a front view photo may be available; sometimes, in *Decoding*, the reader (and no doubt the author) wishes for a back view. The back views of objects in Baptiste's contribution show how helpful they can be.

When dated or dateable objects may be few, and other documentation perhaps sparse, art historians and other scholars turn to painstaking visual analysis. This inevitably has a component of the subjective (as Lavy and others would be the first to acknowledge), as disagreements over whether a particular painting is actually by Rembrandt show. Over and over in *Decoding*, authors say that this object resembles that one and therefore one can tentatively conclude such-and-such. But what if the reader does not concur with the purported degree of resemblance?

The sad conclusion one draws from reading the numerous essays in which dating is discussed—and which confronts the field in general—is that there is little consensus, but only ongoing dispute whether object A is from the 6th century or the 8th, or object B is from the 14th or the 17th century. Can we imagine having to argue over whether the Bamberg Horseman was made about 1230 (as it is thought to have been) or 1530?

[1] A standing crowned buddha image in Nakhon Si Thammarat has an inscribed date equivalent to 1671 but is in a style distinct from that of central Ayutthaya. See Woodward 1997: 236, fig. 232.

Constraints of length and the number and quality of illustrations that authors have been able to provide may contribute to their occasional inabilities to convince us. But an issue in several of the essays is that authors simply assert that something is true without "showing their work"—without laying out the evidence to support their assertion. Lewis Carroll's Bellman may claim that "What I tell you three times is true", but we may remain skeptical.

Some of the authors of essays in *Decoding* overlooked works of other scholars; these authors would have done better to make use of and address this information. Similarly, the names of scholars of the not-so-distant past such as Boisselier, Griswold, and Fontein do not appear often enough in bibliographies. Unless scholars stand on the shoulders of other scholars, the ascent to greater understanding will be slow.

The silos of our disciplines may be a hindrance. Some historians writing in *Decoding* make excellent use of the work of art historians and archeologists—though they may disagree with the art historians' conclusions—but others do not. No doubt the same is true of art historians making use of historians' work, though—speaking subjectively as an art historian—it seems to me that historians are somewhat more likely to fail to pay attention to the work of art historians and archeologists.

Unfortunately some Thai scholars occasionally miss fundamental works in Western languages, leaving gaps in their arguments or perpetuating old notions that have been clarified or overturned by Western scholars. Obviously, Thai scholars need not agree with the findings of a Western scholar, but they need to grapple with the evidence and interpretations. Once again, we can say "and *vice versa*". Some Western scholars in *Decoding* failed to engage with the evidence and interpretations of Thai scholars.

The reasons for these instances of neglect are major issues in the fields covered by *Decoding*. Thai scholars may have limited English or French; the number of Western art historians and archeologists who know enough Thai to read scholarly books and essays is small and diminishing. Access to materials is a big problem. How many libraries in Thailand—the Siam Society aside—have deep holdings of Western art historical and archeological scholarship on Southeast Asia going back a hundred years? On the flip side, a few Western university and museum libraries have deep holdings of Thai materials, but even these will be hard for a scholar in Miami, Cincinnati, or Edinburgh to access, despite the wonders of inter-library loan. Gradually more books and essays will become available digitally, but we have not yet reached the Promised Land of accessibility. Thus, thanks and congratulations to the Siam Society for making the full run of JSS available online, free and totally open access.

Decoding was edited with care, but issues of nomenclature remain that the field—not conscientious editors—must continue to contend with. Scholars in recent years have been calling out problems with a term such as "Theravada", but what do we use instead in a context that does not focus on the nuances of usage? Ditto for "tantric" and "Vajrayana". What do we mean by "Dvāravatī" and

what does it cover? What about "Cham/Champa?" Is there such a thing as "Islamic" art and does it include artworks made by or for Jews or Christians in majority Muslim countries?

Then there is the slippery term "influence", which often turns up in *Decoding*. I suppose we all use it casually and think we know what is meant by it, but the term begs many questions. If I like the clothes Cary Grant wore in a 1940 movie and decide to wear similar ones, has Grant influenced me? In art and culture, when we speak of Persian or Chinese influence, what are we getting at, exactly? What were the processes and the means? On one end of the scale, an observer may note that a fictitious Mughal army conquers Siam and requires that the Siamese wear Mughal clothes; at the other end of the scale, an observer notes that Siamese merchants see Mughal outfits and adopt them because they look chic. In scholarly instances, though, if we say "influence" we need to spell out precisely what happens and how it comes about.

A basic question regarding *Decoding* is "who is the audience?" I have been referring to "scholars". But such a very handsome volume, with many striking and intriguing pictures as well as useful abstracts in Thai and English at the beginning of each essay—though no index, unfortunately—will appeal to non-scholars too. Assuming that non-scholar readers, following their interests, dip in here and there they will generally find up-to-date, well-presented information. However, some essays will be too difficult for non-scholars and other essays will leave most readers asking, "what was that about?" or even "so what?" Further, most readers of all backgrounds will encounter issues not particular to *Decoding*, but to the field of Southeast Asian art and culture studies in general.

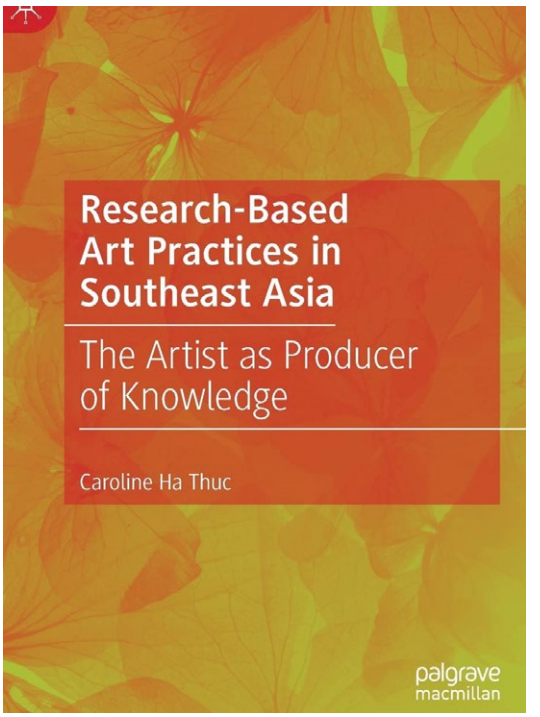
Overall, *Decoding Southeast Asian Art* as a compilation is a remarkable achievement that offers an in-depth exploration of the region's rich artistic heritage. It stands as a tribute to Dr Piriya's distinguished career and contributions to the field and it sets a benchmark of breadth and seriousness that is unlikely to be matched for several decades.

Forrest McGill
Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (*Emeritus*)
forrestmcgill@outlook.com

Reference

• Woodward, Hiram W., Jr. 1997. *The Sacred Sculptures of Thailand: The Alexander B. Griswold Collection*. Baltimore: The Walters Art Gallery.

Caroline Ha Thuc, *Research-Based Art Practices in Southeast Asia: The Artist as Producer of Knowledge*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 289 pages, €99.99, ISBN 978-3031095801 (Hardback)



This is a detailed, highly researched, and theoretically articulate examination of the major practice of "installation" art in parts of Southeast Asia since the 1990s. It will stand as a major companion to this field as well as to contemporary art in the countries of the principal artists cited: Tiffany Chung (Vietnam), Wah Nu and Tun Wing Aung (Myanmar), Khvay Samnan (Cambodia), and Ho Tzu Nyen (Singapore). Since important artists from Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia are not included, their work will require a separate study.

For Caroline Ha Thuc, research-based art practices raise questions of "the potential epistemological impact of an art work, and its ability to challenge the viewers' ways of conceiving knowledge and modes of knowledge production" (p. 8). These practices frequently deploy academic tools of research and establish an archive, which is then the subject of presentation to the audience.

> For the artist who prefers to define himself as "an historian artist", this artistic experimental language aims above all at converting the archive into sensible forms able to move the audience. For him, the concept of "conversion" means "to be born again" and he wishes to give a new life to these archives, hitherto neglected and unknown by most of the people (p. 24).

> Research based practice is located at two theoretical intersections: one is the bringing of truth to experimentation which typically escapes the grasp of iconographically-based art history, and secondly is an art[,] which takes place outside the art institutions whose frameworks of interpretation and indeed whose codes of display or museum siting they challenge (p. 35).

Practice-based works thematize and try to preserve and re-present lost memories. These are frequently suppressed, or their excavation and distribution are highly controlled by governments with which the artist may not agree or is opposed to.

The dating of the earliest work in 1999 by Dinh Q. Lei in Vietnam stands as something of a starting point for such works.

> Driven by the desire to build and preserve a collective memory in Vietnam, he delved into investigative processes, [and] collected and reactivated archives as a material for his artworks. His 1999 installation *Moi Coi Di Ve (Spending one's life trying to find one's way home)* might be the first research-based work from the country (p. 54).

> This kind of work does not attract state support. However, when they do not challenge directly a sensitive piece of knowledge but participate in a flourishing cultural ecosystem, these artists are encouraged to explore historical, social, or environmental issues through their research practices. One case of such permitted excavation is that in Singapore by Ho Zu Nyen, *Utama every name in History is I* (2003)[,] questioning the established history of the foundation of Singapore before its nominal foundation by Raffles in 1819 (pp. 66–67).

In some states such as in Myanmar, the artists Wah Nu and Tun Wu act as cultural researchers but they do not name their sources. This ambiguity or lack of clarity in research-based works means that:

> [...] unlike historians, artists are not bound to any truth and they actually do not "need' to justify their claims. Some artists do not cite on purpose their references or do so in an imprecise or incomplete way precisely to play with this ambiguity (p. 88).

This kind of art research without naming the source is particularly necessary in political contexts where naming the source could incur the political censure of the current regime.

Even in unpromising political contexts, political activism is feasible. In Tiffany Chung's deployment of maps or map archive records, a new kind of relation with the audience is produced where:

> The artist is rather inviting the viewer to become a historian, offering an array of source material and possible stories. This opening-up calls for a collective enterprise (p. 124).

Here we can see the attraction of open works to those who wish to allow the audience to circumvent or set aside prior viewing conventions and interpretations over-determined by prior political ideology or control positions. However, by taking very time-specific materials such as maps out of history to furnish a creative ambiguity, "the ruptures of history" are also occluded. This is particularly so with Chung's *The Vietnam Exodus Project*, 2009, which only showed refugee camps as fixed images "without defining temporal boundaries" (p. 132). For Ha Thuc:

> Chung is aiming precisely at filling the gaps, trying to establish connections between recorded facts and memories [...]. Her embroidery map serves as a relevant metaphor: while she recalls the story of a young refugee, she is repairing holes, stitching together scattered pieces of history (pp. 138–139).

Chung's work is a gesture of protest against what she calls a "politically driven historical Amnesia" (p. 142), and she aims to extend this practice with new groups of artists within Vietnam. I think that, clearly, a feature of open, extended practice is of relational or broadly pedagogical possibilities, rather than a fine arts model-dictated or ideologically driven set of formal academic standards appraised as such by both artist and audience.

An important feature of modernity is the relativization of the past. What was thought of as habitual practice by "us" becomes a newly formulated "tradition" in contradistinction to the other affirming discourse, overturning "modern". When research becomes an oppositional artistic strategy, old figures and their mythological enactment are revivified, often with use of sound and sometimes re-enactment of quasi-religious rituals.

In Wah Nu and Tun Win Aung's *The Name* Series (2008–Present) the installation:

> [...] resembles a monument where visitors experience a quasi-religious ritual that re-actualizes a myth of resistance and freedom. However, its non-didactical dimension leaves its interpretation totally open, offering personal and plural responses (p. 148).

Caroline Ha Thuc's understanding of this series shows her great intellectual strength. She has direct access to the French semiotic conceptual worlds, which enable her to bring clearly into the light aspects of these installation works that might otherwise seem to be merely ideological tropes.

She notes that the Barthesian function of myth is to deform what exists:

> [Quoting Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, French original 1957, p. 187] "When it becomes form, the meaning leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the letter remains". In our example, it is "British affirm their power". This term is "full on one side and empty on the other" and this is exactly what the artists are doing when they "correct history". They deform and transform the idea of the British power, they propose a new vision of it through their representations, and the idea of the British power is sent back to history while a new myth is activated (p. 165).

This voiding of myth and the re-mythification of what exists on the other side of the void is a paradigm case for semiotic reversal when a hegemon,

an authoritarian regime, or a colonial power is overthrown, and its explanatory power accounts for its great interest to anti- and post-colonialists.

The Khmer dancer-performance artist Khvay Samnang has recorded dance performance in the jungle and on the edge of an ancient escarpment using masks, dance forms and music derived from those of a minority people, the Chong, in distant, northeast Cambodia.

Ha Thuc thinks that:

> Khvay's fieldwork resembles indeed the methodology of an ethnographer, but the artist borrowed very freely the tools of the social scientist [... where] the Chong people do not probably embody a "self", as suggested by the prefix "auto", but, on the contrary, a cultural and social otherness he wishes to discover. This community would rather function like a mirror of his own culture and aspirations as an urban citizen in quest for authenticity (p. 178).

By performing the ethnologist's identification, Khvay is inhabited by spirits in the same way as the Chong performers.

> He plunges into the waterfall, walks into the deep jungle, hides between the high vegetation. At one point, he is rising in a vertical movement, against the backdrop of the waterfall, creating an identification between them (p. 203).

> In this new framework, the Chong beliefs and traditional livelihoods are not linked any more to a fantasized reality, but to the radical possibility of modifying globally the way humans inhabit the earth (p. 205).

Hal Foster outlined the possibilities and perils of an artist pretending to an ethnographer's position where the artist is exposed to several dangers because the ethnographer's protocols are not met.

> Almost naturally[,] the project strays from collaboration to self-fashioning, from a decentring of the artist as cultural authority to a remaking of the other in neo-primitivist guise (Foster 1996: 197).

Much could also be said about misplaced or ignored protocols when the artist uses an historian's or art historian's tools without following normal source indication rules. But probably of more significance for research as art practice are Okwui Enwezor's critiques of mass images of the Holocaust, Abu Ghraib, or other traumas, since these events instantiate "more complex reflexions on the relationship between photographic document and historical consciousness" (Enwezor 2008: 33). The importance for research as art practice is the archive, the body of images, realia, and texts, and an amnesia to prevent which surfacing, or alternatively to show the structure of which, can be the intention of the artwork:

> [...] against the tendency of contemporary forms of amnesia whereby the archive becomes a site of lost origins and memory is dispossessed, it is also within the archive that acts of remembering and regeneration occur, where a suture between the past and the present is performed, in the indeterminate zone between event and image, document and monument (Enwezor 2008: 47).

It is here we may approach the most critical if also sometimes problematic form of research as art practice. Ha Thuc calls this "Emancipatory modes of knowledge production" and finds it exemplified in Ho Tzu Nyen's *The Critical Dictionary of Southeast Asia* (2003–2012/ ongoing). Ho proposes:

> [...] a multiple and complex vision of Southeast Asia, converted into an artistic experience: embedded in life and movement, and organized like a network of vegetal underground roots, or "rhizome", the *Dictionary* offers a dynamic, non-linear, multivocal and non-authoritative perspective of the region that resists any definition (p. 212).

This work was inspired by George Bataille's *Critical Dictionary* (1929–1930), written in French, in which he mixed texts and images from ethnology, aesthetics, philosophy, and literature. Bataille's writings were listed without a logical structure or an alphabetic series, and several of Ho's artworks are connected to the same letter and several connected to different letters. With an extremely heterogeneous collection of elements, Ho's work is intended to be difficult for rational thought to conceive and accept (see list in Ha Thuc, pp. 217–218). Nevertheless, it does indicate that:

> [...] the *Dictionary*'s repetitive and excessive apparatus reveals another possible interpretation of the work: instead of perceiving side by side all potential manifestations of Southeast Asia and their singularities, one feels all images and figures could become similar, and almost interchangeable. Their accumulation would then destroy their specificities and homogenize them into a long and loud ritual that would express the power of today's globalizations and uniformization of cultures and traditions (p. 243).

In conclusion, Ha Thuc reinforces one pre-occupation she adumbrated earlier:

> Southeast Asian art practices [...] participate in [...] the "decolonization of thought", a global questioning of the idea of hegemonic scientific rationality that invites us to recover "the capacity to honour experience" against our preconceived conceptualization and segregation of the world (p. 253).

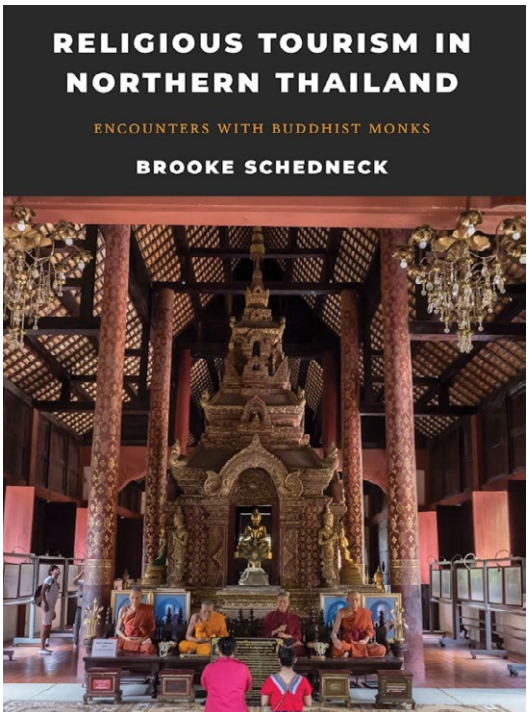
Sometimes it is questioned how relevant Southeast Asian art practices are to the generalized or global art history of modernity. In her conclusion, Caroline Ha Thuc persuasively links her very elaborate and eloquent mobilizations of art theory and particular art histories towards a concern far beyond Southeast Asia.

References

• Enwezor, Okwui. 2008. *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*. New York: International Center of Photography.
• Foster, Hal. 1996. *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

John Clark
University of Sydney (*Emeritus*)
john.clark@sydney.edu.au

Brooke Schedneck, *Religious Tourism in Northern Thailand: Encounters with Buddhist Monks*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2021, 242 pages, US$32, ISBN 978-0295748924 (Paperback)



Partly because of its identification and marketing as a place of rich and accessible Buddhist culture, in the past few decades Chiang Mai has become a preferred destination for international travelers to Thailand. Brooke Schedneck in *Religious Tourism in Northern Thailand* examines the dynamics of encounters between these visitors and the monastic community of the city, as well as the effects that the phenomenon of mass tourism is having upon how temples are managed and local monastic subjectivities are fashioned.

Although it touches upon a wealth of topics related to contemporary Buddhism in Thailand, as Schedneck clarifies in the Introduction, the study is mainly "concerned with the male monastic institution and the encounters that urbanization and education have created" (p. 8). By focusing on practical issues related to the everyday running of temples or the public image of monastics, Schedneck sets herself apart from a long-lasting focus on abstract, doctrinal Buddhist matters. To do so, she relies upon the voices of real flesh and bone monastics dwelling in Chiang Mai city's monasteries—especially of novices, justly identified in the preface

as an "under-studied group" to which scholarship has usually paid scant attention (p. x).

The book is divided into five chapters, each approaching encounters of tourists and monks from different perspectives and emphases. The Introduction (pp. 3–16) provides background to the interactions between foreign travelers and Chiang Mai monastics. Making use of Anna Tsing's notion of "friction", Schedneck sets out to demonstrate that, in spite of their lack of control upon global forces, but through their own initiative, Chiang Mai monastics are capable of harnessing the potential threat that the tourist industry represents. She asserts that monks are able to manipulate these global forces for their own purposes, that is, the economic sustenance and the educational mission of temples, as well as the spread of Buddhism. The "friction" informing those encounters is therefore understood as positive and even "empowering" (p. 157) bringing "mostly benefits" to local Buddhism (p. 9) and enabling monks to "engage modernity on their own terms" (p. 45).

After offering a historical overview of past encounters between local Buddhists and European visitors such as missionaries and government envoys, Chapter 1 (pp. 17–43) enumerates the modalities of encounters focused on in the book, in particular the "Buddhist cultural exchange programs" run by the monasteries offering extended stays for foreigners (pp. 31–34). In fact, the majority of the book's foreign protagonists are young men and women engaged in mid- and long-term interactions with Chiang Mai monastics, often as teachers of English language or as participants in other "cultural exchange" projects run by the monasteries. The chapter also introduces monastic education in Chiang Mai city (pp. 34–37), setting the stage for the encounter between monks and more casual visitors described in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 (pp. 44–75) directly engages the topic of the agency of Chiang Mai monks and novices, highlighting the imaginative solutions monks have developed in order to manage the impact of tourist revenue and tourists' unrestricted access to monastic spaces in the city, such as charging entrance fees to foreign tourists (pp. 57–63) or opening coffee shops and other businesses on temple grounds (pp. 64–69). Confronted with these relatively new phenomena and moral conundrums (for instance, in relation to the handling of money, pp. 46–51), monks may deploy a "rhetoric of deprivation" or a "rhetoric of enough", depending on whether they stand for or against the commodification of access to temples. Others yet favor a middle ground, "maintaining sacredness but allowing for adaptation, upholding the economy of merit while being open to the capitalist economy" (p. 57).

Schedneck's emphasis on the monks' own initiatives, expressed in the constant use throughout the book of terms such as "agency" and "creativity", is well taken. However, we cannot expect that all Chiang Mai monastics have benefitted equally from the wealth brought by tourism into their temples. Nevertheless, and even if, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, different visions among monastics with regards

to how resources are best managed are identified, the study downplays the potential conflicts and inequalities that this affluence may have provoked within and among local monasteries.

Similarly, the book neglects the diversity of geographical and social backgrounds of Chiang Mai monastics. Many novices and monks residing in Chiang Mai city temples come from rural areas in this and other provinces of northern Thailand and beyond. In spite of this, Schedneck seems to group all Chiang Mai monks together into the category of "urban monks"—the other two being "forest monks" and "*khruba*" (ครูบา) or charismatic monks of northern Thailand—when discussing Thai monastic attitudes towards money (pp. 46–51).

Furthermore, many among Chiang Mai city temple-dwellers belong to peoples inhabiting the interstices between the different nation-states in the Upper Mekong region. These young men, as Schedneck points out, try to benefit from the educational opportunities and social mobility that the temples of the city offer, which in fact constitute "the main reason for the large population of student monks" in Chiang Mai (p. 43). While this diversity is occasionally acknowledged, the study fails to mention that these groups differ greatly in their understanding of monastic textuality and discipline, and in general can hardly be described as favoring the "doctrinalist" version of Buddhism which Schedneck attributes to "Chiang Mai monks" as a whole (p. 78; see also p. 86 on the questionable circumscription of the interest in apotropaic practices to southern Thailand).

The same can be said of the typology of international visitors presented in Chapter 3 (pp. 76–100), and elaborated according to the accounts of local monks and novices themselves. The first group in this typology, "Westerners", is designated by Schedneck as "the beneficial other" (p. 77). While monks seem to regard Chinese and Muslims tourists (third and fourth groups, respectively) with a certain suspicion, the second group holds the role of the truly "competitive other", played by Christian missionaries, whose frequent confrontational attitude toward Buddhist monks (pp. 91–93) justifies the negative opinion these monks hold of them. The chapter is rich in anecdotes and provocative; nevertheless, and whatever can be said about the accuracy or degree of incidence of such stereotypes, the description further reinforces the homogenization of "Chiang Mai monks" into a single group with similar interests and prejudices, as these perceptions regarding foreign visitors are implicitly attributed to all members of this community.

Parallel to this homogenization of the diversity of backgrounds among Chiang Mai monastics, the reader may find in *Religious Tourism* a similarly static and essentialized depiction of Buddhism as the main factor determining social action on the part of Chiang Mai monks, the communities they belong to, and, to a lesser extent, the foreign visitors. Even if the author mentions other motivations, in general these are set aside in favor of Buddhism. While one can argue that the study is concerned with encounters between monastics

and foreign travelers and not with the nature of Buddhism, I believe that the indiscriminate use of the term "Buddhist" to characterize everything in the book, from temples and monks to traditions, people, relations, homelands, attitudes, authenticity, or the encounter between monks and foreign travelers itself, while taking for granted what such characterization means, contributes to an overall mischaracterization of the book's subject.

The author's discussion of the controversial topic of missionization in Chapter 4 (pp. 101–128) can be taken as an example of this problem. In spite of the insidious co-optation of the term "the Christian tradition", and, most importantly, of the apparently skeptical position of several of her interlocutors, Schedneck insists on concluding that even though "Buddhists may not subscribe to the proselytizing practices of Christianity, they missionize in ways that make use of practices and ideas from their own tradition" (p. 104). One of these ways, she asserts, is by demonstrating "their lifestyle in public through their demeanor, behavior, and actions" (p. 113). Thus, missionization becomes a key catalyst for monks and novices in Chiang Mai not only for interacting with foreigners, but even for ordaining as monastics in the first place. In the opinion of this reviewer, the issue is not deciding whether or not Buddhist monks and novices engage in activities which can be described as "missionization", but whether "spreading the Dhamma" is truly such a fundamental aspect in their lives.

Schedneck's essentialized representation of Buddhism may be said to be both cause and effect of her choice to prioritize the voices of monastics and (to a lesser extent) foreign visitors. These voices often reference Buddhist doctrine or Buddhist goals as their main motivation. Schedneck takes such statements at face value; by so doing she seems to agree and reinforce the impression that Buddhism is indeed the most important factor in their lives. One suspects that there may be more to monastic's statement than this. However, as the enquiry offers little information about these interlocutors' backgrounds and as, ultimately, ethnographic descriptions of temple management or interactions between monks and international travelers are scarce, there is no way for the reader to contrast such opinions with the actual dynamics of the encounters.

The limitations of the emphasis on the subjective and individual aspects of the encounter at the expense of the collective or structural aspects can be seen in Chapter 5 (pp. 129–157), which relies on testimonies of foreign participants in cultural exchange programs in Chiang Mai temples to explore the transformative aspects of the encounter. This exploration focuses on how expectations of "authenticity" and "difference" on the part of foreigners may be fulfilled or frustrated at the encounter. The ambiguity and tension between such expectations and dominant, normative representations of the life of monastics in general, on one side, and the actual behavior of some members of this group, on the other, is strongly felt in some of the accounts, especially in the few pages dealing with the "misconduct" of Chiang Mai monks and novices (pp. 145–148). In these pages we get a few glimpses of complex and thought-provoking interactions

(and indeed "frictions") among the actors involved, including a student expressing a dislike of meditation (p. 145), or novice monks attending a class with a foreign female volunteer and caught "looking very intently at her bottom" (p. 146). But these glimpses, usually provided by foreigners intrigued or shocked by such anecdotes, are all too brief and mostly unexplored by Schedneck; the lack of pursuing these cases further is regrettable, because they point to the loci where the "authentic" agencies of both monastics and foreign visitors might actually be located.

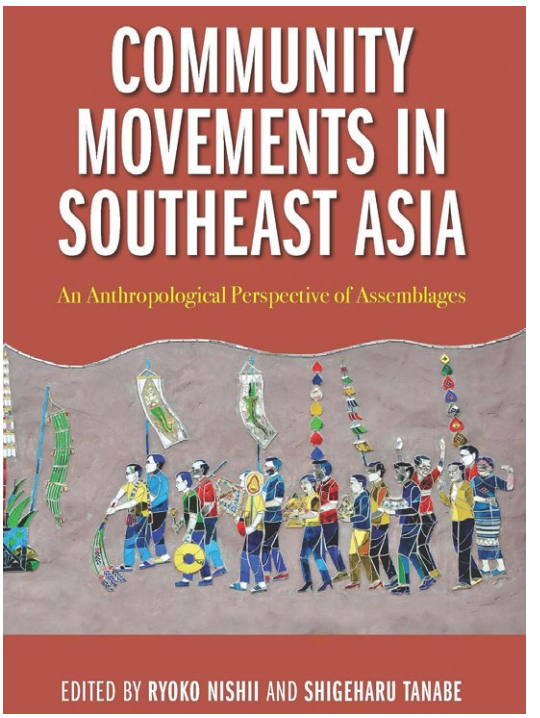
The general Conclusions (pp. 158–172) add some more testimonies regarding the transformative potential of these encounters, this time from the point of view of Thai monastics. It also offers a brief comparison with similar religious exchange programs in other countries with Buddhist traditions, such as Korea or Japan.

It seems to me that the investigation underlying this volume could have been enriched by relativizing "Buddhism" as an explanatory tool and by further questioning mainstream representations and stereotypes concerning the tradition, as well as taking-for-granted Buddhism's over-determination of all things Thai. This caveat could also be applied to the problematic binary "sacred"/"profane", which is overlooked beyond the obvious statement that the two spheres are "not simply collapsed or totally separated" (p. 51). Perhaps monasticism in Chiang Mai could be best depicted as a contested field, in which different visions and discourses related to discipline and doctrine are mobilized by different groups.

In any case, *Religious Tourism* is an informative and innovative work on contemporary exchanges between monastics and international visitors. By exploring relations usually left outside the study of Buddhist monasticism, Schedneck's book represents a valuable contribution to the understanding of the lives of novices and monks in Thailand.

Roger Casas
Independent scholar
roger.casas@gmail.com

Ryoko Nishii & Shigeharu Tanabe, eds, *Community Movements in Southeast Asia: An Anthropological Perspective of Assemblages*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2022, 320 pages, ฿695, ISBN 978-6162151866 (Paperback)



Community Movements in Southeast Asia is the third volume that Professor Shigeharu Tanabe has published as (co-) editor in Chiang Mai where he taught at the University after a prolific career in Japan as a specialist of northern Thailand, Thai Buddhism, and Thai peasant communities. These three books concern Southeast Asian communities, but, with this volume, there are two major differences: (1) Ryoko Nishii, Professor at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa is co-editor, and (2) all the contributors are Japanese scholars.[1]

The volume title is to some extent misleading, since it covers just part of mainland Southeast Asia (Vietnam excluded), the region that used to be called "Theravada Buddhist Southeast Asia". The nine chapters (divided in three parts) present case studies and fieldwork in Thailand (four contributions), Myanmar (three contributions), and Cambodia and Laos (one contribution each). The question this book poses is how communities are influenced by and respond to power in actual small-scale face-to-face situations. The title and subtitle contain the two key concepts of the book, namely community movement and assemblage.

Derived from "community" and "social movement", "community movement" is the process by which people create alternative communities that can persist under inescapable hegemony. This term encapsulates social processes emerging from collectivities of people that cannot be captured by conventional views. This concept is an attempt to show how people move and act in search of a better life. The concept, already proposed by Tanabe in his earlier book (Tanabe 2016), "captures the micromovements in which people are engaged throughout their daily lives" (p. 15).

The second concept presents more difficulties. The word "assemblage" in English fails to provide the meaning of the original French *agencement*, a term that refers to the action of matching or fitting together a set of components (v. *agencer*), as well as the result of such an action, an ensemble of parts that mesh together well. Manuel DeLanda,

[1] For example, in his earlier edited volume, there was only a second Japanese contributor, but four Thai authors, and one by an English specialist of Japan comparing Japan and Thailand (Tanabe 2008).

one of the best-known American Deleuzeans, notes that "the concept is given half a dozen *different definitions* by its creators, [philosopher] Gilles Deleuze and [psychoanalyst] Félix Guattari, each definition connecting the concept to a separate aspect of their philosophy" (DeLanda 2016: 1; author's emphasize).

Here, assemblage is defined as a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons and the relations between them across age, sex, and reigns. The assemblage's only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis of actors, or a "sympathy". In assemblage, it is never filiations that are important, but alliances. In his earlier book, Tanabe wrote that assemblage consists of "a configuration of heterogeneous forces, institutions, individuals, groups, things, and nature where its constituent parts have significant roles and retain a certain autonomy" (2016: 3).

In her introduction to this volume, Ryoko Nishii proposes to see community movements as assemblages, without assuming a pre-existing organic wholeness. She specifies that the assemblage is a totality made up of various relations of extrinsic nature. The constituent parts of the assemblage first break away from the assemblage and connect to different assemblages, where they interact differently.

Chapter 1 (pp. 21–58) by co-editor Professor Tanabe, "The Assemblage of Resistance in Crisis: Buddhist Hermits of King's Mountain in Northern Thailand", is very interesting in its own right. The cases he develops are well chosen and convincing. The King's Mountain hermitage is one of the Buddhist assemblages that emerged from participation by a number of "deterritorialized" people who have settled, or stayed temporarily, as hermits, yogis, or other kinds of "minoritarian" personages since the late 1990s. The members of the hermitage have equipped themselves with self-organizational features into an assemblage characterized by its multiplicity, heterogeneous components, liaisons, alliances, or networks. The King's Mountain hermitage is said to be an assemblage in endless resistance to the Buddhist Sangha and its discourses, which have been constructed through modernization since the late-19th century (p. 50).

In Chapter 2 (pp. 59–91), "Reassembling the Community of Voice: Community Radio in Northern Thailand", Ryo Takagi (Kanagawa University) examines how three community radio stations in Chiang Mai adapted to governmental restrictions on freedom of speech amid changes in power in contemporary Thailand. Communities were reassembled while actualizing the potential of diverse individuals, components, and mediators. The cases discussed in this chapter precisely fit the characteristics of assemblage, defined as the consolidation of diverse elements or a combination of multiple diversities, or a dynamic arrangement of diverse elements combining heterogeneous forces, systems, individuals, objects, and natural factors, both human and non-human, such as the voices on the radio and social media (p. 60).

In "Forest Memory and Community Movements: Hmong Communities in Thailand" (Chapter 3, pp. 93–123), lead editor Ryoko Nishii explains that many

Hmong are angry and frustrated that the land they used to cultivate freely is now owned by others and that they are now forced to pay rent just to continue cultivation. Thus, shared memories of the past in the forest with the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), combined with present circumstances, have formed differing social movements as assemblages in these three communities. These are not social movements based on political culture or class homogeneity, but ad hoc assemblages formed by chance, characterized by diversity and heterogeneity.

In Chapter 4 (pp. 127–159), "Teacher Training Workshops as an Opportunity for Self-transformation: The Dhamma School Movement in Myanmar", Keiko Tosa (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies) proposes to regard the diffusion of Buddhist Sunday schools as community movements and examine how the Dhamma School Movement is spread and interacts with the political-religious situation in Myanmar.

With Chapter 5 (pp. 161–179), we enter the second section dealing with ethnic minorities in Myanmar. In "Muslims as Citizens of Myanmar: Education in the Muslim Community", Ayako Saito focuses on education in the Muslim community in Myanmar (4.3% of the population) after the anti-Muslim movement from 2013 to 2016, but before the *coup d'État* led in February 2021. She portrays Bamar Muslims as trying to live as model Burmese citizens in Burmese society.

In "Ethnic Language Education and State-building in Myanmar: Community Movement of Kayah (Karenni)" (Chapter 6, pp. 181–207), Tadayuki Kubo (Otsuma Women's University) examines the type of community assemblage formed by the Kayah (Karenni) people through the invention of the Karenni script which has emerged as one of the core foundations of the Karenni Nation. Khu Hteh Bu Peh (1937–2011) created a script when he discovered that the pronunciations and tones of his Kayah native language could not be expressed correctly with the English or Burmese alphabets. A textbook was created in 1980, computer fonts in the 2000s, and today the Karenni script is used on social network services (SNSs), such as Facebook.

Chapter 7 (pp. 211–238) takes us to northeast Thailand (Isan), with "The Integrated Agriculture and Community Movement in Northeast Thailand". Nobuko Koya (Otani University) makes clear that the type of agriculture that encourages self-sufficient food systems as well as a sustainable environment, including agroforestry, is recognized as a community movement. She assesses the characteristics of Inpaeng Network's integrated agriculture and the relations between the community and the state, capitalism, and globalization.

In "Crossing the Limits: Implications of Rope Bridge-building for Social Movements in Southern Laos" (Chapter 8, pp. 209–265), Tomoko Nakata (Kobe City University of Foreign Studies) attempts to examine how local inhabitants in southern Laos struggled to sustain themselves after being deprived of a large part of their farmland for large-scale rubber plantations. She explores how people, under the authoritarian Socialist regime, were deprived of the option of organizing collective actions against the government. She describes how they developed ways to act to

fulfill their primary needs and how these actions can be compared to a social movement. These people did not intend to organize a genuine social movement; rather they developed a movement of people who, in an unfamiliar situation, met and found that they could cooperate for a common objective, eventually proving they were capable of achieving their goals without recourse to open protests (p. 261).

In the last Chapter 9 (pp. 267–300), "Glocal Assemblage in Community Movements: Transforming Collective Actions in Cambodian Land Rights Movements", Professor Toshihiro Abe (Otani University) made use of the concept of community movement as well as "glocalization" and "assemblage", attributed here to Manuel DeLanda, exploring a possible type of community movement in a politically restricted context (p. 270). These collective actions all incorporated new social elements in different ways. Such juxtapositions as monks and IT tools, political movements, female leadership, Hollywood symbols, and indigenous peoples in "traditional" mountain areas were eye-catching, particularly for members of younger generations not previously involved in political activity (p. 282). These actions developed into a glocal assemblage of community movements in a context of harsh globalization and intra-state political restrictions (p. 290).

The contributions in this book are undeniably very informative case studies on often rarely researched aspects of Asian societies. However, I am not entirely persuaded that the use of concepts such as "assemblage", "subject", or "rhizome", borrowed from well-known French philosophers (here, especially Deleuze, Guattari, and Foucault) was absolutely necessary. A good theory should make things easier to understand, not more obscure. In his earlier edited volume, Professor Tanabe (2008) referred to the concept of "imagined communities" first developed by the late Benedict Anderson (1936–2014), a true specialist of Southeast Asia, and proposed an interesting alternative with "imagining communities". Perhaps, the Japanese editors of this volume and their fellow colleagues should have tried here again to propose new concepts more appropriate to their research goals instead of trying to make use of general theories developed by earlier Western philosophers ignoring everything about Southeast Asian complexities.

References

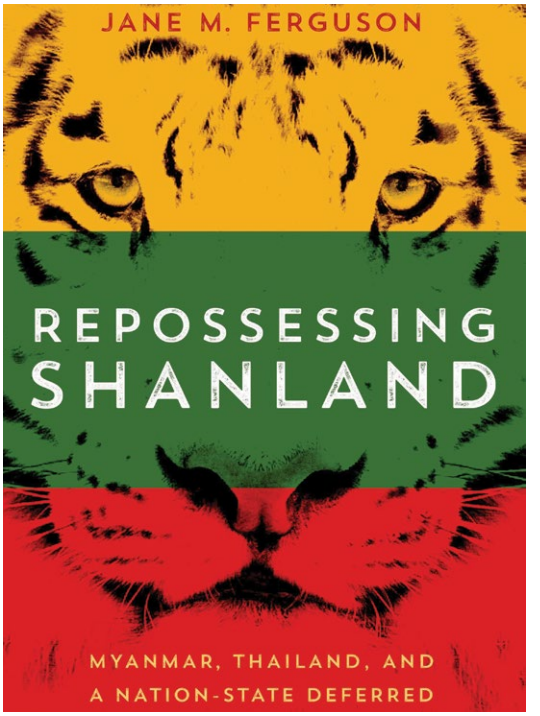
• Delanda, Manuel. 2016. *Assemblage Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

• Tanabe Shigeharu, ed. 2008. *Imagining Communities in Thailand: Ethnographic Approaches*. Chiang Mai: Mekong Press.

———. 2016. *Communities of Potential: Social Assemblages in Thailand and Beyond*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.

Jean Baffie
IrAsia–CNRS
Université Aix-Marseille (Retired)
jeanbaffie28@gmail.com

Jane M. Ferguson, *Repossessing Shanland: Myanmar, Thailand, and a Nation-State Deferred*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2021, 320 pages, $79.95 ISBN 978-0299333003 (Hardback)



In this book, Jane Ferguson "retraces the cultural roots and ongoing dynamic relationship between the people of Shanland, its citizens, its advocates and enemies through the transitions of colonialism, the Cold War, heroin wars, and finally to the neoliberal economies of displacement and undocumented labor" (p. 10). She explores what it means to be Shan for a community of former soldiers and their families in the context of both Thailand and Myanmar. The community, which she calls "Wan Kan Hai", is in Thailand but within shouting distance of a Myanmar military camp and relatively close to a Shan State Army-South camp, the remaining Shan military force. Most of the members of the community are former soldiers from the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA) led by Kawn Song (กรสอง), also known as Mo Heng (หมอเหง).

To make her case, she draws on her extensive fieldwork in Wan Kan Hai and her linguistic competence in Thai, Shan, and Burmese. Her most intensive fieldwork was between 2004 and 2007, when she lived in the community for a total of two years. During this time, she made occasional trips to Chiang Mai to explore the lives and livelihoods of Shan working there. She also spent 10 weeks in Myanmar exploring Shan popular culture and media. Since 2008, she has returned to either Thailand or Myanmar twice a year to continue her research.

Ferguson begins her argument with a prologue about Suerkhan Fa (also spelled Sukhan Fa, สุคันฟ้า), the mythical founder of the original Shan kingdom. He reigned sometime between 1152 to 1364. The recollection of this hero and his ability to unite Shan into a single kingdom serves as the symbol for the ongoing drive to recreate a Shan nation.

Ferguson examines the decades-long process to repossess the nation-state by exploring "the military battle and cultural war in its ongoing relations with Shan's principal interlocutors: Burmese and Thai" (p. 26). This is then contextualized through the analysis of the border region's political economic history which situates her discussion of the Wan Kan Hai community and locates its members within Thai, Burmese, and Shan histories. Her particular focus is on the changing nature of these polities in light of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial histories.

The first chapter (pp. 28–61) discusses the pre-colonial and colonial period and provides an overview of earlier states, the role of religion (Theravada Buddhist), and ideas about ethnic identity. The colonial period takes us through the creation of bounded territorial states, the imposition of European notions of states as one people, one territory, and one religion, and the consequences these had for local political leaders' ideas about who and what they are. The Shan Chief's school, established with the sons of Shan princes (เจ้าฟ้า) in mind, helped create a sense of unity among Shan elite. The Burmese constitution established a federated state where groups such as Shan had the right to secede after ten years. These two facts helped set the stage for Shan leaders to advocate for an independent nation-state.

Cold War politics (Chapter 2, pp. 62–84) involving remnants of the Chinese Nationalist Army (Kuomintang, KMT); the United States' involvement in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia; the opium trade; and political unrest within post-colonial Burma and the 1962 coup that put Ne Win (in office from 1962 to 1988) and the military in power must be added to the mix of colonialism, Theravada Buddhism, etc. It is against this landscape that Ferguson explores the various militias and Shan armies that arise in response. This provides the history behind the settlement of Wan Kan Hai, the people who settled there, and its location. Here we learn about the leaders of two major Shan armies, the infamous Khun Sa (ขุนซา), the "Heroin King" (1934–2007), connected with the Shan State Army, and Kawn Song, leader of the Shan United Revolutionary Army.

Chapter 3 (pp. 85–117) shifts to the role the SURA played in supporting and promoting Shan culture and literacy. This incorporates the history of the various Shan scripts as well as the assorted primers for learning to read and write Shan. Ferguson emphasizes the promotion of Shan nationalist rock and roll songs; the chapter includes three of these songs, complete with lyrics in Shan script as well as translations into English. The chapter ends with accounts of the path some women took to become soldiers in the SURA.

Chapter 4 (pp. 118–146) provides a parallel discussion of Khun Sa (real name Zhang Qifu 张起福), the Shan United Army, and the Mong Tai Army (MTA) that consolidated a number of Shan armies, including the SURA. The chapter details Khun Sa's background and life and his involvement in the Shan United Army as well as his role in establishing the MTA. Ferguson details the intertwined histories of the Shan United Army, the Kuomintang army, the Shan State Army, and associated traffic in opium/heroin, gems, and other goods. As the Cold War ended, political relations among the MTA, SURA soldiers and leaders that joined the MTA, and the Burmese and Thai governments became increasingly complex. Because Ferguson's community was mostly constituted from remnants of the SURA and followers of Kawn Song, she reports their negative perspective on Khun Sa, who is painted rather darkly.

Chapter 6 (pp. 177–198) turns towards the lives and livelihoods of Shan

refugees/migrants inside Thailand, focusing on Shan living in Wan Kan Hai. Shan do not have refugee status; this means that, for many in this community as well as elsewhere in Thailand, Shan do not have Thai identity papers and may not have one of the various identity cards that allow them to work outside the province where they live. Since they do not have farmland there are not many opportunities for earning a living within the community. If they work outside the community, they are at risk as illegal aliens. Ferguson discusses the legal and historical background on immigrants and refugees and then provides a series of stories about the hassles Shan people from Wan Kan Hai face working in urban areas and interacting with Thai nationals; obviously, Thai do not see Shan as proper "Thai".

In this chapter, we see inside Wan Kan Hai and the people's relationships with Thai people both as tourists and do-gooders. Some tourists come because of the attraction of Shan cultural performances and to visit what they consider what life was like in the past in Central Thailand. Non-government organizations or private voluntary organizations come to improve the lives of people in the community but usually without achieving much. Ferguson uses this discussion to highlight the ways in which Shan see themselves in relation to lowland Thai people and the limited power they have to negotiate their position.

From "traditional" Shan culture and uneasy relationships with the Thai political-economy and culture, the next Chapter 7 (pp. 199–219) examines the creation of modern Shan popular culture, particularly Shan rock and roll. This is a subject close to Ferguson's own rock and roll heart as she played guitar during jam sessions with people in the community. This chapter is the most ethnographic and from it gives us a good sense of the people in the community and Ferguson's positive relationships with them. While Ferguson likes rock and roll, she uses this chapter to make the point that music is for more than enjoyment. Informally people will play Burmese songs; to be Shan does not mean purging their music appreciation of Burmese influences. At festivals and other events where being Shan is highlighted, the songs are all Shan. As Ferguson says, "the repossession of Shanland is not just a military project; it is an intellectual and cultural assertion of Shan-ness, with enemies much more nebulous than just Tatmadaw soldiers with guns drawn" (p. 216).

The penultimate Chapter 8 (pp. 220–242) focuses on the large-scale festival that leads up to participating boys becoming Shan novice monks. This ceremony, Poi Sang Lawng (ပွဲးသၢင်လွင်; ปอยส่างลอง; festival of novices-in-becoming) is the iconic "Shan" festival. It is celebrated in Shan communities where the people are Thai citizens, in Shan migrant communities in Chiang Mai, and in Wan Kan Hai and surrounding Shan communities. The Thai Tourist Authority (TAT) promotes these festivals primarily for Thai tourists. The ordination is a rite of passage for the boys as well as their parents who sponsor them. The festival takes on added meaning for people in Wan Kan Hai as an enactment of a Shan national state that is also "in-becoming".

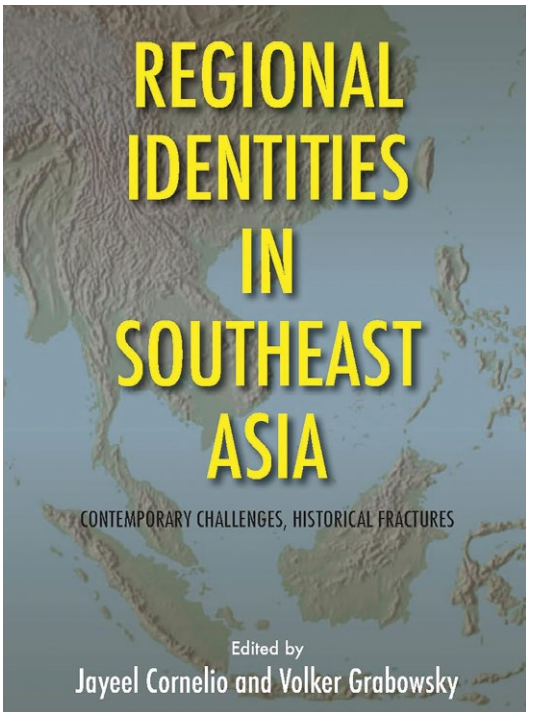
The conclusion reiterates the major points of Ferguson's argument. This Chapter 9 (pp. 243–253) begins with the construction of a water system for Wan Kan Hai, drawing on the resources of the Thai administration for plans, on community members for funding, and the nearby Shan State-South Army for heavy construction, while the water comes from streams on the Burmese/Shan side of the border. This vignette encapsulates the issues confronting Shan attempts to repossess Shanland.

The desire to repossess Shanland does not necessarily reflect the views of all Shan in Thailand. Shan in Mae Hong Son are descendants of Shan who lived in the area before Thailand incorporated the area; they became Thai citizens as the area became part of Thailand. While it is unclear how many of Thai–Shan are committed to repossessing Shanland, Shan migrants not based in communities established by one of the Shan armies, which includes the majority of the people living in Wan Kan Hai, desire an independent Shan nation.

In conclusion, Ferguson's writing is engaging and lively. Within the chapters, Ferguson often alternates between providing historical and current political background for the topic at hand and then offering anecdotes and stories to illustrate how Shan from her community deal with these issues. This alternation provides sufficient background while making the subjects engaging for non-specialist readers. For more knowledgeable readers the book provides insights into the processes that create and support a contested national and ethnic identity.

Nicola Tannenbaum
Lehigh University (*Emerita*)
nt01@lehigh.edu

Jayeel Cornelio & Volker Grabowsky, eds, *Regional Identities in Southeast Asia: Contemporary Challenges, Historical Fractures*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2023, 472 pages, ฿950, ISBN 978-6162151903 (Paperback)



This book is the product of a research project entitled "Competing Regional Integrations in Southeast Asia" (CRISEA), funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 program. The project was undertaken by researchers of a consortium of thirteen European and Southeast Asian academic institutions. Based on the observation that Southeast Asia emerged historically at the confluence of competing and overlapping identities, the volume's case studies examine the ways generational configurations, transnational linkages, and experiences of violence shape collective imaginings and sentiments of belonging. Against many previous works that emphasize the role of the state in conceptualizing and promoting national and regional identities, the authors of the present volume choose to focus on the experiences, strategies, and views of non-state actors who are looking for legitimate ways of self-definition.

The collection brings together seventeen contributions that combine the skills and approaches of history, anthropology, sociology, political science, literature, and development studies. According to the volume's focuses, these contributions are divided into three thematic sections: "generations", "transnationalism", and "violence". The first section, "generations", begins with Chapter 1 (pp. 33–54) by Medelina K. Hendytio, who analyses how the Indonesian millennial generations (born between 1980 and 1999) shape the contemporary collective political imagination about ASEAN identity. While perceiving ASEAN as essential and relevant, most respondents to the survey stated that the regional organization's identity is more based on geographical proximity and physical/cultural similarities than on shared values. In Chapter 2 (pp. 55–74), Danny Wong Tze Ken traces the evolution over time of the Chinese Hakka linguistic practices in Malaysia, concluding that, while the use of dialect as spoken language has gradually declined, a revival of dialect identity has occurred amongst these Hakka since the 1970s and the implementation of the "New Economic Policy" favoring Malay *bumiputra*. The next two chapters deal with mining communities. In Chapter 3 (pp. 75–104), Natasha Pairaudeau lays out the singular

destiny of the Kola, Burmese caravanners who became ruby and sapphire prospectors in the Pailin area at the end of the 19th century. From the independence of Cambodia onwards, they gradually lost their monopoly of gem extraction. Persecuted by the Khmer Rouges, they were either physically eliminated or fled the region. The author, however, shows that they have been recently patrimonialized as an "ethnic group", a symbol of local gem mining, for tourist development. More oriented toward the precariousness of labor and livelihoods caused by transnational capitalism is the perspective developed by Oliver Tappe. In Chapter 4 (pp. 105–124), he shows how national legislation, transnational migration, investment politics, and global economic dynamics differentially affects generations of artisanal small-scale tin miners and work migrants in the Laotian province of Khammouane.

The second section of the book, "transnationalism", opens with Chapter 5 (pp. 125–150), a study by Prasit Leepreecha of the transnational organizations and events that promote indigenism in Southeast Asia. He concludes that the concept of indigeneity is of recent import in the region and that only two countries (the Philippines and Cambodia) now provide particular "indigenous" ethnic groups with specific rights. In Chapter 6 (pp. 151–180), Alan Darmawan and Jan van der Putten reconstruct the transnational process of promotion of the Riau Islands as the motherland of the Malays. This process involves civil servants, cultural activists, and other local agents; it culminated in 2012 with the coronation of a new sultan. In the following Chapter 7 (pp. 181–204), Filomeno Aguilar Jr discusses Singapore's restrictive immigration rules applied to the skilled Filipino labor force, following the financial crisis of 2008–2009 and the ruling PAP's election debacle in 2011. Filipino migration is also dealt with by Jayeel Cornelio and Erron C. Medina in Chapter 8 (pp. 205–224), but from an inquiry into the motivations of Catholic priests sent on a mission to Bangkok. Their research finds that a recurring narrative among the Filipino priests is that their decision to become missionaries was an interruption in the ordinary course of their existence brought about by a divine encounter. In Chapter 9 (pp. 225–246), Kwanchewan Buadaeng also studies Christian missions, by showing how their apostolic work has created a new ethno-religious identity, named Talaku, among the Karen, on the borderland between Thailand and Myanmar. Sirui Dao and Volker Grabowsky, in Chapter 10 (pp. 247–270), reopen the already well-documented dossier of Buddhist pilgrimages and the restoration of Tai Lue temples in Sipsong Panna (Xishuangbanna), which involve transnational networks of devotees and famous monks. More original is the account in Chapter 11 (pp. 271–292) by Roger Casas of the life and funeral of the last king of Sipsong Panna, Dao Shixun (刀世勋, 1928–2017; also known as Chao Mom Kham Lue), who remained a symbol of Tai Lue identity, despite Beijing's attempts to plunge it into oblivion.

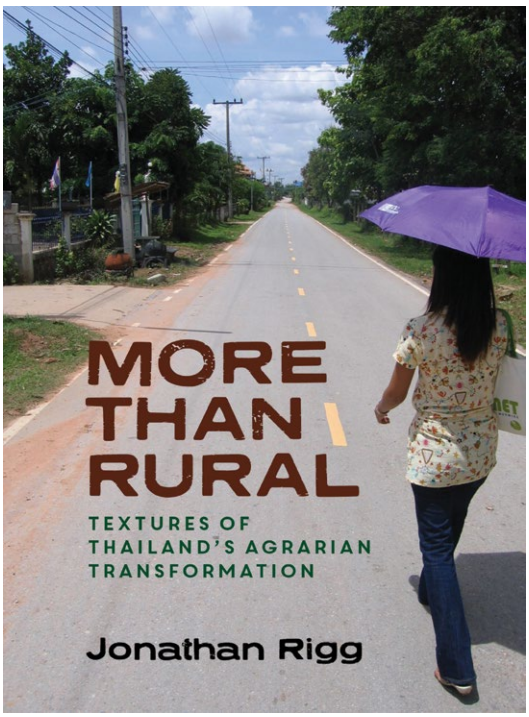
The third section of the book, devoted to "violence" as a factor of

internal cohesion, begins with Chapter 12 (pp. 293–316), a study by Erron C. Medina and Bianca Ysabelle Franco of the effects on Philippine democracy of the anti-crime campaigns led by Rodrigo Duterte (2016–2022), and Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr, his successor as head of state. There follows Chapter 13 (pp. 317–346) by Vidhyandika Djati Perkasa, who focuses on the construction of Papuan youth as the result of the armed contestation by Free Papua separatist movements against Indonesian violent oppression and marginalization. In Chapter 14 (pp. 347–372), Jacques P. Leider retraces the episode of interfaith violence that bloodied Rakhine (Arakan) between 1942 and 1952, which prefigured the Islamophobic violence when the Rohingya were victims between 2012 and 2017. In Chapter 15 (pp. 373–406), Volker Grabowsky questions the role young people played in the mass violence orchestrated by the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s. The Chapter 16 (pp. 407–438), moves the discussion to the plateaus of central Vietnam. Through the testimony of a Hrê veteran from the district of Sơn Hà (Quảng Ngãi province), Đào Thế Đức and Andrew Hardy relate the 1950 revolt of the Hrê against the Communist administration and the resulting repression. They also explore the impact of the memory of the event on the construction of the identity of this group of highlanders. Finally, in the last Chapter 17 (pp. 439–456), Janina Pawelz analyzes the ambiguous political role played by martial arts groups in Timor-Leste. Her study deals with the street violence carried out by these groups, the powerful feeling of belonging they cultivate, as well as the links they maintain with the Indonesian *pancak silat* groups of which they are a local emanation. She also analyzes their involvement in the political game as "electoral muscle" and their problematic infiltration of the police and military forces of Timor-Leste.

While each contribution to the collection sheds valuable light on often little-known identity construction processes, the whole suffers from the diversity of the topics addressed, the various social scales and periods considered, and their insufficient articulation with a common set of questions. Although the scientific editors claim that, taken together, the volume's chapters question "to what extent non-state actors are taking part in shaping, or contesting, regional integration" (p. 1), most contributions do not directly address this central question. Hence, the reader senses a scattering of resources and results, evoking more the proceedings of a weakly structured symposium than the result of a closely coordinated research program.

Bernard Formoso
Université Paul-Valéry–Montpellier 3
bernard.formoso@univ-montp3.fr

Jonathan Rigg, *More Than Rural: Textures of Thailand's Agrarian Transformation*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2022, 324 pages, 14 illustrations, 1 map, US$30, ISBN 978-0824892371 (Paperback)



In this extremely important work,[1] Professor Jonathan Rigg is absolutely clear in his methods and goals. The volume consists of a collection and synthesis of over 35 years of fieldwork and analysis of Thai rural—and "more than rural"—relations. The Preface sets forth his agenda (p. xv), "start[ing] with a simple puzzle with a simple argument. Everything is connected in one way or another. The puzzle is why Thailand's rapid development, modernization, and deep structural change have not led to a more throughgoing restructuring of the countryside [...] reflected, most obviously, in the apparent persistence of the Thai smallholder [...]". Riggs terms this persistance "modernization without depeasantization". "The core argument [...] is that we must view the Thai countryside as more than rural [...]. [U]nderstanding the Thai countryside, whether as a social, political, or productive space, is only possible when we take our eyes *off* the rural ball [emphasis in original]. This extends from how we conceptualize the household to the ways we track and measure livelihoods, to how we come to understand Thai rural identities, to why crops are cultivated in the way that they are, and even to why Thailand finds itself in such a political impasse today".

Chaper 1's introductory paragraphs (pp. 1–3) focus this argument:

> The Thai rural present is often little understood by those at the center of political and economic power in Thailand, and rural futures are couched in terms of what was, or was thought to be, rather than what is, or might be. Bangkok's urban elites have little understanding of or connections to the countryside. The rural imaginary claims a tight hold on the Thai psyche but frequently bears little resemblance to what is actually happening in the countryside. [There is a] disjuncture between the empirical rural and the imaginary rural [...]. This gap [...] reflects a contrasting worldview and set of experiences. It [comes from] an

[1] The paperback volume is reviewed here; it is identical in every way to the hardback edition (published in 2019) except in the covers and the cost.

> emerging and deepening level of *asocial* inequality [emphasis in original] that separates the population[s] of Thailand [...].
>
> There are no discrete populations of peasants with their feet in the paddy fields and their minds in the village. Millions of farmers [and their children] have worked in urban contexts and industrial employment, often overseas. They have engaged with the wider world, often for many years, and have knowledge of that world [...]. Rural Thais are not cut off and isolated from the key currents of transformation [...]. The Thai economic miracle has been founded on the willingness of millions of rural dwellers to leave the security of their homes and farms to labor in the factories and building sites and on the streets and in the coffee shops of Bangkok and other urban centers thus making Thailand's transformation to an upper-middle-income economy possible. This is the human heart of the Thai—and the wider Asian—economic miracle [...].

I quote Rigg extensively because he pinpoints *the* major disconnect in Thai society, which I was unable to express in my own research during doctoral fieldwork. In 1972, as I was leaving the paddy rice growing northeast Thai–Lao village where I had spent a year and a half, I looked over at a house whose members I knew and thought about how all ten of them managed so that, together and separately, they could see themselves as members of a successful household at the same time as each of them had their own goals for achieving success. I had been in residence to initiate a baseline study of land-tenure and social organization for a community scheduled to experience qualitative change in rice production, from a single crop to double cropping with fertilizers and insecticides as part of "The Green Revolution". The project was sponsored by the Asian Development Bank; the Thai government developed the project and undertook to dig canals. The first year of irrigation water had come downstream—but could not be successfuly utilized because the fields were higher than the canals.

But even with that early disappointment, it was apparent that the major impact was an unintended consequence: the construction of raised dikes to channel the canal water afforded nearly year-round transportation to nearby markets and jobs. Village farmers had consistely told government agents that growing rice was the least remunerative way rural people could spend their time; income could more easily be acquired almost any other way.

The ensuing tug-of-war between the state-mandated obligation to grow rice and villagers' knowledge that the way to get richer was to go to Bangkok, Sa-ud (Saudi Arabia), Iraq, Israel, and elsewhere into "the world" has led to Rigg's paradox of small landholdings integrated with an increasingly "cosmopolitan" population (Keyes 2012) enjoying paved roads, electricity, large homes, community wifi and internet,

and, most importantly, increased wealth and well-being.

More Than Rural is a comprehensive synthesis addressing this paradox charting ways to understand and cope with it. A symposium (De Koninck et al. 2020) and several published reviews (Huffmann 2020; Schmidt-Vogt 2020; Smith 2020; Natrajan 2021) have outlined the book's theses and its conclusions. In this review, I would like to add two concepts coming from anthropology—(1) the developmental cycle of domestic groups and (2) further clarification of the relationship between rural and urban. These concepts help to extend the focus beyond our usual definitions of rural to enable us to comprehend the continuing development of a cosmopolitan, sometimes aggressive people, given the miniscule land bases from which they come.

Beyond the Preface, which presents an illuminating short history of Prof. Rigg's engagement with northeast Thai farmers, and Chapter 1, "Introduction", lie nine enlightening chapters, each titled with a single word: Inheritances, Spaces, Flourishing, Society, Land, Labor, Livelihoods, Class, ending with Futures. Each chapter ranges widely over the massive amount of research that Rigg and others have conducted in Southeast Asian rural societies over the last decades, always with their eyes canted towards the national and international urban world. In other words, the volume provides a national (in Thailand's case, Kingdom's) view of urban-rural interactions. Rigg, while ensuring that rural folks are seen as actors and agents in their presents and futures, also guarantees that the—usually unhelpful—conceits of urbanites, especially government administrators, are examined and addressed.

Chapters 2 through 4 (15–89) are especially important in developing Rigg's holistic analysis. They also provide exemplary instructive examples of the depth and breadth of his analysis of rural economy and society as well as comprehension of the underlying dynamics of urban input and attempted control over what ruralites might want to do. He makes clear that the tension between urban conceits and rural realities, especially a nation's or Kingdom's drive for development, couched in materialistic terms when meshed with local aspirations for better and successful lives has resulted in the conflicts of the present day, involving minimal land holdings, local versions of McMansions, and vocal and behavioral agitation for better lives. Rigg identifies that the issues are *not* problems of rural people; they stem from the arrogance of those who see the rural population as easily duped "buffaloes" (ควาย, *khwai*), mechanical respondents to whatever is doled out by urbanites.

Rather than continue to abuse Bangkok's elite, I would prefer to add some thoughts to complement Rigg's analysis: to add possible insights that might make his sophisticated analysis even more prescient. Here I draw upon my own experience with northeast Thai villages coupled with that of an astute observer with an urban perspective, Professor Richard O'Connor.

When I first went into the village in 1970–1972 (Lefferts 1974), I made an intensive study of wet-rice production. It was evident that I was learning

from experts; they had access (this was before the introduction of GMO rice varieties) to 16 different varieties of *khao niao* (ข้าวเหนียว), sticky rice, which formed the foundation of their subsistence, and eight different varieties of *khao chao* (ข้าวเจ้า), boiled rice, most of which was sold to Chinese rice millers. I do not know if these varieties corresponded to genetically different strains, but they did evidence extreme local adaptations coupled with farmers' local knowledge of the requirements for the successful cultivation of each variety. Farmers complemented these rice varieties with sophisticated plowing, water management, planting, transplanting, harvesting, and threshing practices. The labor required at times during this cycle was intense, and, natually, households cooperated with labor exchange practices, articulated with management of household labor resources to handle these tasks. This is not a picture of dunderhead workers; each housedhold member, especially of the descendant generation, was constantly thinking of how they could do better themselves. Success might mean marrying and moving to new settlements or, increasingly, going to work in factories in and around Bangkok. Regarding this mix of tactics, O'Connor (1996: 68–69) observed that rice conduced to a different form of social organization from the urban model. It depended on intensive local knowledge and careful engagement with other living things—both rice and people.

The government's program imposed on village farmers allotted little respect for local knowledge. It was based on the transformation of rice cultivation to double cropping, importing fast growing varieties dependent on fertilizer and insecticides, allowing no time for fallowing of the land, disintegration of rice straw, or supression of water-borne diseases, thus involving a shift from water buffalo plowing to mechanical "iron buffaloes" (ควาย เหล็ก, *khwai lek*) and the reduction of the annual demand for intensive labor input. These changes also meant the recalculation and reallocation of household labor and the substitution of rice varieties that could mature without transplanting and be harvested by combines.

However, divorce of household members from intensive involvement with rice production did not separate them from the idea that the rice they ate was a product of their, or their mother's, land, nor from their determination to return "home" at least once annually to obtain a bag of home-cultivated rice, engage in community festivities, and re-establish their participation in village life. The scarcity of food and poverty of the home landscapes in which they matured, as well as the constant governmental drumbeat regarding "development", schooled emigrants to become acutely aware of opportunities to better themselves elsewhere, even as they continued to be aware that home was a material and emotional resource. *Pattana* (พัฒนา, development) was and remains a constant trope in Buddhism as promulgated by the state as well as a state-supported goal for each village, household, and member. Local villagers incorporated this concept into their world view in their quest for sustenance, resulting in a constant search for new land and new resources on which to base a living. The lights and freedom

of Bangkok and the development of industry provided opportunities to conform to these mandates.

Rigg is clear: "We cannot write of *the* household as if it is self-evident and unproblematic" (p. 100, emphasis in original). He documents this in Chapter 5 (90–117), "Society", discussing how the average age in households has increased and households have become multi-sited, with wage-earners in distant locations and children and elderly in villages. I would like to expand this, to point out that these dynamics are part of a household's developmental cycle, captured in the anthropological phrase, "the developmental cycle of domestic groups" (Goody 1958; Lux 1962). It is well documented that, over time, Thai rural households would expand in size as children were born and reached maturity, becoming workers contributing to the success of the total enterprise. But, as the children matured, it would become evident that the household could not support most of them, even though the amount of land and other resources captured by the totality of family members might increase through rent or purchase from "shrinking" households in other stages of their own developmental cycles. Thus, marriages occurred, with, preferentially, a man moving to his wife's household and then that couple striking out on their own, taking with them some of the accumulated wealth of her parental household. If sufficient land was available, this emerging family/household might remain in the parental village; if not, they moved to a new location. Until about 1980, land resources in northeast Thailand were available to provide for aggressive expansion. Meanwhile, urban and industrial expansion provided additional resources, not accompanied by land. However, in villages, as "daughter" families with husbands and grandchildren emigrated, the original household shrank in size and wealth; the land that children had helped cultivate was sold or rented to other households increasing in size and wealth. Of course, the lottery of reproduction, children's genders, and the health and well-being of parents and children would all contribute to a family's chances of success. But these would vary over time, giving other households their chances to become successful, up to the point when their children would have to leave.

As land for expansion became increasingly scarce, two new factors entered into the equation. First, urban and industrial growth provided ways for married and single children to hive off and exist as employees, providing resources to be sent back to grand-parents with dependent grand-children; thus, multi-sited households. Second, effective, reliable birth control became available and was rapidly and widely advertised and adopted. Thailand became a world leader in birth control, with a today reported 1.3 children total fertility per woman, well below replacement. Together these two factors resulted in rural households with miniature land holdings and a drastically altered "developmental" cycle.

My other contribution to Rigg's volume stems from O'Connor's analysis of Siamese or Thai society. As noted above, O'Connor observed that rice cultivation produced a form of social organization substantally different from

the urban pattern. Rice cultivation depends on intensive local knowledge and the development of an integrated culture, whereas Siamese or Thai urban society is based on rule: "[...] enforcing interaction (rather) than enforcing integration". "Governing exerted power coercively while growing rice nurtured life cooperatively. These two activities were radically different and largely unconnected. Overall, 'rule' and 'rice' were symbolically, structurally and functionally incompatible" (O'Connor 1996: 69; 2000: 433).

This is the paradox that Riggs addresses in the first four chapters of *More Than Rural*: why are Thai governmental structures so incapable of responding to what is going on in the larger world of the rural? The epitome of this disjunction today is the continuing recourse by Thai elite to "sufficiency" as their preferred goal for rural householders. "Increasingly, (governmental policy) has become a mission to control and limit the desires of the rural population in order to prevent rural classes from changing the terms of the political debate" (p. 82). The Thai government's emphasis on "development" produced a multi-faceted economy with a substantial population divorced from local knowledge of rice culture, without removing them from their allegiance to their original land and kin. Moreover, this emphasis on "development" is now accompanied by a stress on "sufficiency", for a population brought up to "develop", to achieve, become wealthy, and attain material success.

The question for Rigg and other observers of the Thai and Southeast Asian rural and, necessarily, urban scenes is the implications of this paradox. Will policies result in a population divorced from locality, dependent on rice bought in a market with a minimum representing parental landholdings, essentially alienated from its background, or will these policies engender a population that feels that success has come, that they are part of an integrated Kingdom, and the future bodes well for themselves and their children? As this review is written towards the end of สิงหาคม (August), พ.ศ. ๒๕๖๗ (2567 BE = 2024 CE), the prognosis does not look good.

References

• De Koninck, Rodolphe Montesano, Michael J., and Rigg, Jonathan. 2020. Symposium on *More Than Rural: Textures of Thailand's Agrarian Transformation. SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 35(3): 525–546.

• Goody, Jack, ed. 1958. *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

• Huffmann, Benjamin D. 2020. Review. *Asian Ethnology* 79(2): 410–412.

• Keyes, Charles F. 2012. "Cosmopolitan" Villagers and Populist Democracy in Thailand. *South East Asian Research* 20(3): 343–360.

• Lefferts, Leedom. 1974. *Land Tenure and Social Organization in a Northeastern Thai Village*. PhD Dissertation. Boulder: The University of Colorado.

• Lux, Thomas E. 1962. *Mango Village: Northeastern Thai Social Organization*. MA Thesis. University of Chicago.

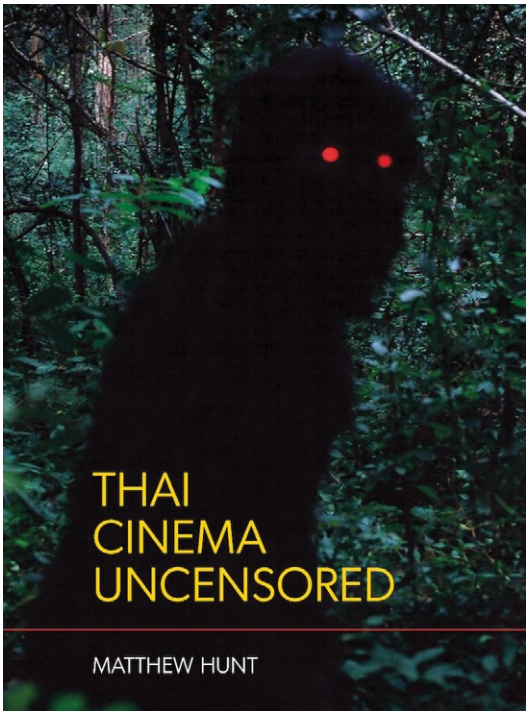
• Natrajan, Sriram 2021. Review. *Review of Agrarian Studies* 11(1): 147–149.

• O'Connor, Richard A. 1996. Rice, Rule,

and the Tai State. In *State Power and Culture in Thailand*, ed. by E. Paul Durrenberger, 68–99. New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies.
———. 2000. A Regional Explanation of the *Tai Muang* as a City-State. In *A Comparative Study of Thirty City-State Cultures*, ed. by Mogens Herman Hansen, 431–443. Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Arts and Sciences.
• Schmidt-Vogt, Dietrich 2020. Review. *International Quarterly for Asian Studies* 51(3–4): 207–210.
• Smith, Nick R. 2020. Rural Perspectives on Asia's Urban-Rural Relations. *Journal of Asian Studies* 80(2): 540–543.

Leedom Lefferts
University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill
lleffert@live.unc.edu

Matthew Hunt, *Thai Cinema Uncensored*, Chiang Mai: Silkworms Books, 2022, 312 pages, $32.00, ISBN: 978-6162151699 (Paperback)



La production et la réalisation cinématographiques en Thaïlande sont depuis longtemps confrontées à diverses formes de censure. Qu'elles soient d'origine étatique, pour ne pas froisser le système politique monarchique, ou issues du traditionalisme socioculturel et religieux, ces censures se manifestent également sur le plan commercial. Les impératifs d'exploitation favorisent la distribution des blockbusters internationaux, laissant peu de place aux films indépendants aux sujets et à l'esthétique hors normes. Le livre *Thai Cinema Uncensored* de Mathew Hunt[1] offre ainsi une plongée éclairante dans l'univers cinématographique thaïlandais, explorant l'histoire complexe de cette industrie du point de vue exclusif de la censure endogène ou exogène, notamment de ceux qui ont dû la subir, les réalisateurs. L'auteur met en lumière l'évolution de cette atteinte à la liberté d'expression par l'image depuis ses débuts jusqu'à son statut actuel qui n'aurait rien à envier à celui du passé. Il y met aussi en exergue différents moyens de la contourner ou de la combattre, en invitant des réalisateurs à évoquer leurs expériences personnelles, même si au final, ce sont les spectateurs qui en pâtissent.

[1] Matthew Hunt est un auteur britannique installé en Thaïlande depuis 2004. Titulaire d'un Master en culture visuelle, il s'intéresse à la culture du pays qu'il décrit régulièrement sur son blogue : https://blog.matthewhunt.com

Dans une introduction rapide (pp. 1–3), Hunt esquisse d'abord un état des lieux du cinéma thaïlandais, subissant les affres d'une censure qui fait fi de la notion d'art cinématographique et qui contraint les metteurs en scène à réduire la portée de leurs œuvres. L'ouvrage se découpe ensuite en deux parties, la première est chapitrée selon les différentes censures et les époques qui s'appliquent à ce cinéma, regroupées en thèmes plus ou moins développés. La seconde partie fait appel aux réalisateurs thaïlandais considérés comme indépendants qui apportent leur contribution par des anecdotes et un œil plutôt sévère sur ceux qui les gouvernent, les censeurs, les cultures bien-pensantes qui pèsent de tout leur poids sur ce qui serait inacceptable de voir ou simplement d'apercevoir.

Le premier chapitre (pp. 7–55), assez étoffé, examine les épisodes marquants de la censure du cinéma thaïlandais, son interventionnisme, soulignant les actes politiques, les lois relatives à l'audiovisuel et les influences internationales qui ont contraints les films thaïlandais ou étrangers présentés dans le cadre d'événements thaïlandais à être circonscrits ou interdits. Hunt offre de nombreux exemples précis sur des révisions (de représentation, de montage, de bande sonore, de sous-titrages, de titre de film...), des restrictions (d'agenda, de passage et lieux d'exploitation, de publics, de communication publicitaire...), des annulations (de pressions diplomatiques, de lobbying d'affaires, militaire ou religieux...), des interdictions (de certains publics, de scènes, de propos...) qui reflètent les capacités créatives du système lorsqu'il s'agit de trouver des moyens de restreindre l'accès à la cinématographie. Il serait même invoqué l'incapacité de discernement du public thaïlandais, une identité nationale ou *Thainess* qui rendrait celui-ci insensible et imperméable à ce qui sortirait d'un droit chemin balisé par les principes de religion, royauté et nation. Une façon de fabriquer l'opinion ? s'interroge Matthew Hunt.

Le deuxième chapitre (pp. 57–68) se penche sur la vision de l'être humain dans sa chair, la notion de genre, les intimités du corps, les promiscuités et les attirances qui seraient socialement et culturellement inacceptables à l'écran, mettant en évidence les réalisateurs et les œuvres emblématiques qui ont marqué ces aspects de la sexualité et de la nudité. Hunt analyse les éléments stylistiques et narratifs de ces films, entre érotisme et genre Queer, soulignant leur impact sur le terrain de la censure. Ce cinéma pose aussi la question de la sexualisation occidentale et ses interactions avec un public attaché à une culture thaïlandaise et la promotion du tourisme.

Le troisième chapitre (pp. 69–122), plus dense, explore les défis que constituent les trois piliers du militarisme, du monarchisme et du nationalisme face aux désirs de montrer les changements survenus dans le cours de l'histoire politique du pays, sur les dernières décennies. Des facteurs tels le pouvoir, la loi (de lèse-majesté), les violences et la corruption ont largement contribué à modifier la création cinématographique en Thaïlande. L'influence des politiques déterminent la naissance ou la mort d'un film, le façonne et le marque, le

rende parfois illisible pour celui qui ne connaît pas les clés de la métaphore. Les grandes dates des révoltes citoyennes, les coups d'état, les figures contestées des pouvoirs ne sont pas décrites dans leurs parfois tragiques et cruelles réalités, mais suggérées par de silences évocateurs, des codes stylistiques comme des couleurs ou des formules, afin d'échapper aux ciseaux souvent malhabiles et parfois définitifs des censeurs. Pour celles et ceux qui connaissent l'histoire de ce pays, ces films qui ont su passer au travers de leurs mailles, donnent des indices révélateurs sur le ressenti non-dit des populations.

Le quatrième chapitre (pp. 123–144) enfin, se penche sur la troisième colonne intouchable de la religion d'État, le bouddhisme, et ses représentants parfois trop humains pour apparaître dans une séquence. L'irrévérence d'une simple scène de la vie quotidienne d'un moine peut déclencher l'hydre de la censure. Une attitude un peu ridicule, une sortie hors cadre, un propos irrespectueux peut déclassifier un film dans une catégorie jugée non projetable au public, dans un système de classification déterminant pour le succès ou le bannissement d'un film.

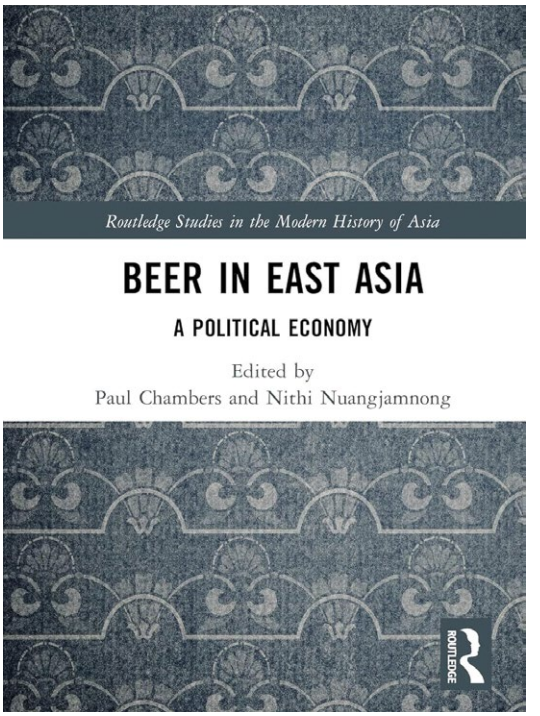
La seconde partie (pp. 146–241) s'intéresse aux points de vue des réalisateurs, scénaristes et/ou producteurs indépendants ce qui offre au lecteur une contribution inédite et personnalisée des contraintes ou des interdits liées aux formes de censure évoquées dans la première partie, même si les rapprochements ne sont pas toujours explicites. Elle apporte une vision d'artistes et de professionnels du film, agréable à lire, avec un système de références en notes de fin clair et organisé pour chaque intervenant. Les anecdotes et les explications qu'apportent les plus expérimentés d'entre eux, comme Apitchatpong Weerasethakul (อภิชาติพงศ์ วีระเศรษฐกุล ; né en 1970), ont le goût amer de combats perdus d'avance mais souvent dans un esprit de jeu du chat maladroit et de la souris espiègle. D'autres, comme Thunska Pansittivorakul (ธัญสก พันสิทธิวรกุล ; né en 1973), n'hésitent pas à trancher dans le vif quant aux réalités historiques parfois massacrées... Malgré ces aspects intéressants et parfois drôle, cette seconde partie laisse une part malheureusement congrue aux femmes, sur quelques pages, comme Tanwarin Sukkhapisit (ธัญญ์วาริน สุขะพิสิษฐ์ ; née en 1973), Kanittha Kwunyoo (ขนิษฐา ขวัญอยู่ ; née vers 1986) et Ing Kanjanavanit (อิง กาญจนะวณิชย์ ; née en 1959), mais à décharge, elles sont peu nombreuses dans le métier à ce niveau, ici comme ailleurs.

En conclusion, *Thai Cinema Uncensored* de Mathew Hunt offre une exploration inédite du cinéma thaïlandais indépendant, écrite pour des aficionados d'un cinéma aux marges. On peut cependant regretter que le livre semble davantage s'adresser à un public non thaïlandais qu'à des spectateurs locaux. Cela souligne une réalité où les spectateurs thaïlandais, en grande partie détournés des salles de cinéma, se réfugient dans les séries diffusées sur des plateformes de streaming. On aurait également aimé que la censure soit évoquée par les spectateurs, qui eux-aussi ont à la subir, notamment dans les coupures sauvages qui déconstruisent la narration, les floutages qui cassent l'esthétisme

de l'image ou du son. Il aurait été intéressant d'entendre le point de vue de réalisateurs plus consensuels, issus du cinéma de divertissement, tels que Nonzee Nimibutr (นนทรีย์ นิมิบุตร ; né en 1962), eux aussi confrontés aux abus de censeurs peu scrupuleux. De même, la perspective de femmes de renommée internationale encore rares dans le cinéma thaïlandais, comme Anocha Suwichakornpong (อโนชา สุวิชากรพงศ์ ; née en 1976), aurait été pertinente, d'autant plus qu'elle est citée à plusieurs reprises dans l'ouvrage. Malgré cela, le livre reste une ressource précieuse pour ceux qui cherchent à comprendre l'évolution et la diversité du cinéma thaïlandais à travers les époques.

Bruno Marchal
Thammasat University
bruno.m@arts.tu.ac.th

Paul Chambers & Nithi Nuangjamnong, eds, *Beer in East Asia: A Political Economy*, London: Routledge, 2023, 278 pages, £96, ISBN 978-1032253275 (Hardback)



The editors of this compilation open their brief Introduction by stating, "This volume did not have to be written" (p. 1). I disagree, and I was delighted to learn of this publication, which was a concise, informative, and enjoyable read. Although beer may appear to some to be a commodity requiring little serious investigation, scholars of business, industry, foodways, marketing, and consumption studies know well that beer brewing has become a truly global industry with significant import for economies and societies throughout eastern Asia. The first chapter serves as a theoretical framework for the ten chapters that follow, each focused on the beer market's development in the following countries, including four in East Asia and six in Southeast Asia (ASEAN): Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar.

The volume's conceptual framework is outlined very clearly in Chapter 1 (pp. 3–13). The editors and authors place an institutionalist focus on political economy, referred to as Historical Institutionalism (HI). Each subsequent chapter follows a similar pattern—beginning with the origins of beer production in the given region, detailing how domestic producers emerged and developed, describing key

changes in market share between rivals, discussing how brewers have marketed a globalized product in a way that appeals to domestic consumers, and briefly describing the more recent emergence of craft brewing.

Through this HI lens, each author approaches their chosen regional beer market with an eye for major brewers, institutions, state actors, or conditions that drove, influenced, and sometimes impeded the beer industry in that country. The authors touch on specific owners, be they state companies, corporations, or privately-held concerns, and they explore the state environment that influenced or controlled the beer marketplace. Most chapters assess the effort by leading brewers to win and dominate market-share, and how that was often a limiting, even retarding force that has stymied innovation and creativity. The pattern that emerges reveals that, once a major brewer takes control of the domestic market, rivals seldom eclipse them. Occasionally, the tables were turned, but if the state's revenues are threatened, upstart firms could learn the hard way not to challenge the leaders. Brewing is chiefly about generating profit and governments rely upon its tax revenues, particularly where economies are developing and state-controlled breweries are involved. For this reason, in every market studied, craft brewers remain bit players. They may be celebrated by discriminating consumers and they are frequently media darlings, but their market share is tiny, and their economic importance is limited.

Space does not permit a detailed review of each of the ten chapters and their regional markets, but key highlights from each follow here. Given the analytical pattern of HI outlined above, which each author follows closely, the chapters have an empirical and somewhat repetitive approach to market development and the narratives sometimes feel unproblematized. For example, few of the authors explore the way that beer production competed with and sometimes snuffed out indigenous brewing traditions. Still, the volume features many bright spots, including anecdotes about beer advertising, sales, and consumption that give the reader a taste of local markets and consumer preferences, as well as the motives behind state regulation, taxation, and control.

In Chapter 2 (pp. 14–34), author and co-editor Nithi Nuangjamnong focuses upon Japan, home to one of East Asia's oldest modern beer brewing industries and one that had a difficult start, given beer's initially high cost and unfamiliar taste. This author establishes the pattern of the industry's emergence, early development, mid-20th century wartime disruption, postwar reformation, and steady corporate ascendancy into a global brewing leader with international reach and brand recognition. Chapter 2 also establishes the pattern of the craft brewer emerging as a welcome market participant in recent decades, particularly given the product innovation that they bring, but only if they are content to control a tiny fraction of the market and rely very often upon managing bars and restaurants in order to survive.

In Chapter 3 (pp. 35–58), Zhao Weihang and co-editor Paul Chambers

explore China's beer industry, including early brands like Harbin and Tsingtao. The postwar emergence of Bear Beer is also an interesting study, which seesaws between Russian and Chinese control. At one point, when the Chinese sought to revitalize the brand in the 1980s, they undertook an eight-month search to find the lost original label, not seen for 35 years. As three market leaders emerged, framed as the "Three Beer Kingdom", Chinese brewing output ranked among the top in the world, even if their flavors differ little. Again, the chapter closes with the emergence of the craft brewpub in the alleyways of the nation's capital, which has led to beer tourism among those in search of unique and creative brews. Even so, the authors note that these little brewers struggle to compete against the market leaders.

In Chapter 4 (pp. 59–79), Brendan Howe documents the development of Korea's beer marketplace, which turns on a 2012 report in *The Economist* that derided the nation's beer as "boring". This prompted a reckoning, especially with the success of North Korean beer brewing, which was widely regarded as more flavorful and innovative. Once again, the pattern of market deregulation led to the emergence of South Korean craft brewers' intent upon reinvigorating the nation's beer marketplace with a diversity of flavors and appeal. Nevertheless, the longtime market leaders continue to control about 85% of the market share.

In Chapter 5 (pp. 80–105), Christian Schafferer presents one of the most engaging narratives as he explores Taiwan's beer market. Owing to the island's small scale, the author is able to delve much more deeply into where and how beer has been sold. Especially interesting is the study of the beerhouses that emerged in urban centers in the early 1980s, which were celebrated by drinkers but abhorred by neighboring residents upset by the noise, traffic, and unsanitary conditions. Another interesting topic includes the advertising wars between domestic brewer Taiwan Beer and foreign imports like Heineken, which culminated in Taiwan Beer's deployment of "over 140 scantily dressed young women to promote the brand in bars and restaurants" (p. 92). With time, the industry has matured and come to focus on identity in an effort to appeal to younger consumers, who often gather in dining pubs because they cannot afford to buy their own homes.

In Chapter 6 (pp. 106–138), Eric C. Batalla and Julio C. Teehankee detail the development of brewer San Miguel, which they claim, "has been a witness to Philippine state-building", and "has been embedded in the Filipino national psyche and plays a role in nationalist mythmaking with its media advertisements" (p. 106). They explain that HI "shows how political struggles are mediated through institutions" (p. 107), which they follow with a lengthy study of San Miguel's emergence, development, and its complicated ownership history. Despite ups, downs, and a complicated relationship with the political ruling class, San Miguel remains a fixture, and it has continued to innovate in order to retain its grip on market share and consumer sentiment.

In Chapter 7 (pp. 139–163), Nicholas Chapman outlines beer's evolution in Vietnam, where the beverage enjoys widespread popularity. By this point in

the book, another pattern emerges; beer has been adopted and domesticated in each of the nations examined, and despite indigenous brewing traditions of all sorts, beer leads the way in production, sales, and consumption of alcoholic drinks. Moreover, beer brands and their marketing efforts focus closely on national identity, pride, and uniqueness versus neighboring countries. This author too follows this thread from beer's birth as a colonial endeavor born of French interests, to its reclamation as a light, low-alcohol domestic brew known affectionately as *bia* (beer). In another especially bright passage, Chapman explores phenomena like beer kegs known as *bia bom*s, and simple, green glass cups that retain perennial popularity at simple beer cafes known as *bia hơi*, which have become a "Vietnamese cultural icon" (pp. 144–145). Through the 1990s, beer breweries mushroomed; though the country had just two breweries in 1990, it had 300 by the year 2000. While rising sales came together with the many social ills of overconsumption, beer is now a "much-loved institution in Vietnam" and has become "a drink for the masses" (p. 152).

In Chapter 8 (pp. 164–185), editors Nithi Nuangjamnong and Paul Chambers take the reader down a now-familiar road that begins with beer brewing by resident foreigners and leads gradually to the emergence of domestic brewer Boonrawd Brewery in the 1930s. Efforts by rival firms to compete with Boonrawd and its star brand, Singha, were unsuccessful, owing to Boonrawd's well-developed distribution network, significant brand recognition and loyalty, and close relationship with the monarchy. By the late 1950s, Thailand's military was rumored to have a plan to nationalize the market leader, and it briefly supported a rival brewer, but ultimately it was the emergence of Chang Beer that finally ended Boonrawd's dominance, which was further beset by financial stresses and an unfortunate fire at its newest plant in 1995. As for craft beer, it began with a Thai military colonel who bravely flouted the nation's laws against home brewing, leading to fines, but also to the erosion of legal prohibitions and the emergence of smaller brewers.

In Chapter 9 (pp. 186–211), Martin Rathie documents the emergence of the Lao beer industry, following a long period of French control of brewing, which was designed to recoup revenue for the colonial government. The domestic brewer Beerlao finally emerged in 1969 and was nationalized in 1975. Over the next 20 years, its brand evolved from Bière Larue to Bière Lao and finally to Beerlao by 1995, reflecting rising consumer sentiment for the domestic brewer over neighboring imports. Again, while imported brands and craft beer would try to compete for market share, Beerlao has retained its edge through new product innovation and clever marketing that focuses on national pride. Importantly, the author also points out that the Lao government benefits from Beerlao's success on two levels; it generates huge revenues for the state, and "it helps to sedate the populace on a broad scale", as it "distracts their attention from chronic problems such as delayed salaries, deteriorating workplaces, virtually non-existent welfare and a casual regard for law" (p. 202).

In Chapter 10 (pp. 212–238), lead editor Paul Chambers explores the beer industry in Cambodia, which he argues is trending toward being a "predatory state", given its efforts to maximize revenue for the ruling class without regard for the effect on broader economic development (p. 212). Again, the beer industry grew out of French colonial era, but Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime (1975–1979) brewed no beer and the industry did not resurge until the 1990s, though imported brands from neighboring Thailand began to arrive in the late 1980s. Over the next 30 years, liberalization of Cambodian laws inspired brewers once again and by 2018 the three market leaders were Carlsberg Cambodia, Heineken Cambodia, and Khmer Beverages (KHB). As the tax regime generates significant revenues for the state, there is little incentive to change that tax regime, to institute a minimum drinking age, to place limits on beer advertising, or to curb the use of "beer girls" who work at beer gardens. Again, craft brewing has exploded in Phnom Penh, but despite the fierce competition, craft beer accounted for just 2% of market share in 2022, on par with that in other regional nations.

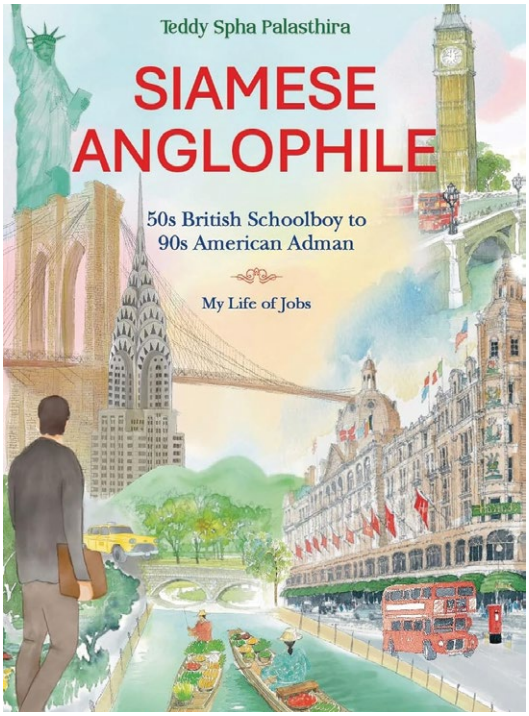
Finally, in Chapter 11 (pp. 239–255), Richard Horsey and Thomas Kean explore the beer market in Myanmar (Burma), which was dominated by imported British brands and beers produced locally by the Fountain Brewery and the Mandalay Brewery until the Second World War. For decades thereafter, beer production was very limited, as the cost was too high for most consumers to afford. A new military regime took power in 1988, but market reforms stalled and the military soon retained control of beer production and its revenues. However, foreign brands, which were deemed superior to domestic brews, continue to be smuggled into Myanmar in tremendous volumes, topping 1 million hectoliters per year by 2018 (p. 246).

And there, the volume ends abruptly, with no conclusion. This was a lost opportunity to draw together the many interesting themes covered by the many authors, including taxation, foreign competition, investment, ownership struggles, national pride and identity, state monopolies, military control, craft brewing, pubs and bars, beer marketing, material culture, and so on. Though the conceptual HI lens is valuable, many of these wider themes were enjoyable to read and they deserved further synthesis.

Broadly, this work will appeal to scholars of East and Southeast Asia who study business, history, industry, foodways, and both post-colonial and postwar development. It features a good deal of valuable data on firms, markets, production, and consumption, which will help those who study international product innovation and adaptation. Most importantly, this book underscores the remarkable popularity of beer in eastern Asia, where generations of consumers have grown up knowing it as a domestic product, often tied to national identity, and with deep ties to the state owing to its lucrative revenues.

Jeffrey W. Alexander
Truckee Meadows Community College
jalexander@tmcc.edu

Teddy Spha Palasthira, *Siamese Anglophile: 50s British Schoolboy to 90s American Adman—My Life of Jobs*, Singapore: Talisman, 2023, 256 pages, US$13.90, ISBN 978-9811848162 (Paperback)



This book is a follow-up to Teddy Spha Palasthira's *Addresses, A Siamese Memoirs*, which came out in 2010. In the first book, Teddy wrote about his childhood in England during the Second World War and in post-war Europe. This continuation takes Teddy through secondary education at an English boarding school and his studies to be an English Barrister at the Middle Temple in London.

After school, Teddy took a number of part-time jobs to earn extra pocket money to finance his lifestyle before finally returning to Thailand in 1969. He was briefly a civil servant at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before leaving for the glamourous world of international advertisement, from which he retired as one of its global stars. He is now a writer based in Thailand.

This book is a worthy successor to *Addresses*. Teddy is as entertaining a raconteur as ever, with an astonishing memory. Once a long time ago, he told me about an old school reunion which he attended. It was hilarious and it is reproduced in the first chapter of this book word for word on page 23.

The book is obviously based not just on memory; it is thoroughly researched and full of fascinating facts. His old school, Eltham College in southeast London, had also been attended by Eric Liddell, who won the 400-meter gold medal at the Paris Olympics of 1924, so memorably recorded in the 1981 Oscar winning film, *Chariots of Fire*.

Teddy's infectious sense of humor means that there are regular Laugh Out Loud moments from start to finish. In the first chapter, he recounts the baneful influence of Mrs Beeton's *Book of Household Management* (1861) on English cooking, where one of her recommendations "was to boil pasta for one hour and three quarters before serving. For macaroni though, she recommended a mere three quarters of an hour, just long enough 'to simmer'" (p. 9).

Chapter 2 to Chapter 8 are about Teddy's part-time jobs. They were wonderfully varied, starting with working for the British Royal Mail to being an "Oriental Extra" in American and British films made in English studios. He even appeared in *Goldfinger* (1964), during the filming of which he was offered a ride home by Sean Connery. Teddy appeared

in another James Bond film, *You Only Live Twice* (1965) before Sophia Loren spread both her hands around his to protect the flame from his Zippo lighter for her cigarette during the filming of *A Countess from Hong Kong* (1966). For Teddy, "it was a dramatically memorable moment [...]. She had the longest fingers and the most beautiful hands I had ever seen. For her it was simply getting her cigarette lit" (p. 167). In this last chapter before graduating to adulthood, Teddy has time for a footnote on page 154 to tell us that British–American comedian Leslie Townes "Bob" Hope (1903–2003) was born in Eltham, not far from his school, whence he emigrated to America with his parents in 1908 at the age of five.

Chapter 9, "Goodbye Jobs, Hello Career", starts off with a short account in two and a half pages of his brief career at the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which he joined in 1969 about six months after me. The experience must have been so bad that his memory fails him. We were in the News and Analysis Division of the Information Department, not the press office; and we worked in the Information Department building, not in the main Saranrom Palace building (พระราชวังสราญรมย์). He recalls correctly that our office was not air-conditioned, and it was indeed "very hot"; it was also full of mosquitoes.

Teddy was assigned to edit the Foreign Minister's collected speeches the Ministry was publishing. He did not stay to finish the task, which was left to Nitya "Nid" Pibulsonggram (นิตย์ พิบูลสงคราม; 1941–2014) and me to complete. I even designed the cover for the two-volume publication, which came out before Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman (ถนัด คอมันตร์; 1914–2016) left office in 1971. After less than six months, Teddy left. I sympathized and said so to his father, Somboon Palasthira (สมบูรณ์ ปาลเสถียร; 1909–2000) who was then the distinguished and elegant Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, adding that Teddy must be very happy to leave the Ministry. Somboon sardonically replied that Teddy may be happy, but he was not. I think he wished his son would become an ambassador and head of the service like himself.

Teddy went on to have a stellar career in advertising, during which he once "arranged a traditional Thai dinner in the tropical gardens of the Siam Society" (p. 181) for David Ogilvy (1911–1999), the British advertising tycoon and founder of Ogilvy & Mather. He has written about advertising in two books, *A Print Point of View* (1985) and *The Rise of Asian Advertising* (1995, co-authored with Ho Won Chang and Hung Kyu Kim). He has even taught the subject at a prestigious school of journalism in the US Midwest, where "interestingly, Brad Pitt, a Missourian, studied [...] but did not graduate" (p. 220, footnote), and which also included such famous *alumni* as George C. Scott (1927–1999), the American actor, director and producer, and Thomas Lanier "Tennessee" Williams (1911–1983).

After describing his last job as an academic in Chapter 10, he ends by discussing the future of work in Chapter 11, "Jobs Unknown". Teddy left the Thai Foreign Ministry which he found "boring

and badly paid" because he "needed work that grabbed [him], not just intellectually, but also [his] heart and soul" (p. 176). He found his vocation. What is more, he has "been able to express the lifelong search for [his] identity by writing this book, and [he has] finally discovered what [his] life has been all about" (p. 223). Teddy has shared his life experience with us in this most enjoyable book.

Tej Bunnag
Thai Red Cross Society
tej@redcross.or.th