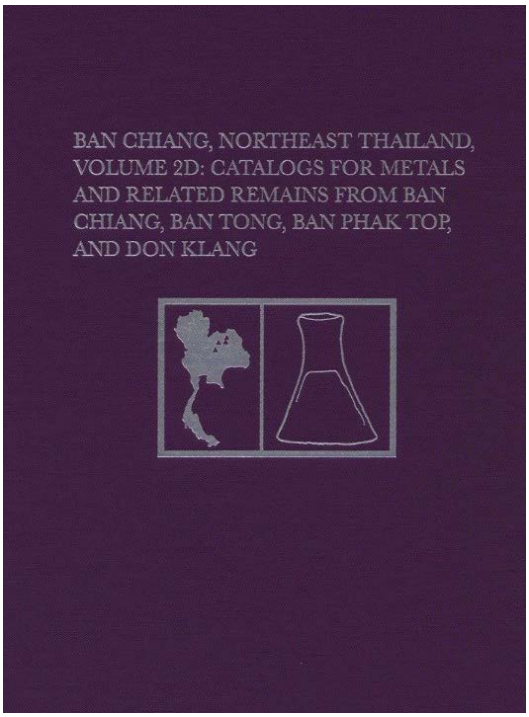
Joyce C. White & Elizabeth G. Hamilton, eds, *Ban Chiang, Northeast Thailand, Volume 2D: Catalogs for Metals and Related Materials from Ban Chiang, Ban Tong, Ban Phak Top, and Dong Klang*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2022, 312 pages, US$79.95, ISBN 978–0934718400 (Hardback)



This book is one component of a comprehensive multi-volume series produced by the Ban Chiang Project, dedicated to the study of prehistoric metallurgy and society in Southeast Asia (White & Hamilton 2018–2019).[1] As the fourth and final installment focusing specifically on documenting metal artifacts and related materials, Volume 2D catalogs the artifact assemblage from four archeological sites in northeast Thailand: Ban Chiang (Nong Han district, Udon Thani province), Ban Tong (Nong Han district, Udon Thani province),[2] Ban Phak Top (Nong Han district, Udon Thani province), and Don Klang (Kosum Phisai, Mahasarakham province). Excavated in 1974–1975, Ban Chiang and the three test sites have become central to scholarly efforts to reconstruct the technological and cultural trajectories of ancient Ban Chiang society. The Ban Chiang Project, formally initiated in 1982 as a collaboration between the Thai Fine Arts Department and the University of Pennsylvania Museum, not only continued archeological and laboratory research in the region, but also contributed to Ban Chiang's designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1992.

One of the most significant discoveries at Ban Chiang was the recovery of bronze artifacts from the deeper layers of its stratified cultural deposits—finds that were initially interpreted as the earliest evidence of metallurgy in Southeast Asia. These unexpected artifacts challenged prevailing assumptions about the timing and development of metal technology in the region and spurred renewed inquiry into the origins and transmission of prehistoric metallurgical practices in Thailand and surrounding areas. Early interpretations, placing the beginnings of metallurgical knowledge in Thailand around 2,000 BCE, were shaped by dating results later shown to be inaccurate. Among the hypotheses that emerged was a speculative link between Ban Chiang's metalworking

[1] An overview of the Ban Chiang Project can be found here: https://www.penn.museum/research/project.php?pid=10. Volume 2C was critically reviewed by Charles Higham in this journal (2020)—*Editor's note*.

[2] More than one location in Thailand is named Ban Tong. This archeological excavation site is situated a short distance from the Ban Chiang area.

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and Asian northern steppe traditions, particularly the so-called "Seima-Turbino phenomenon", which was thought to have spread southward through the uplands bordering eastern Tibet before reaching mainland Southeast Asia. Although this hypothesis has been critically reassessed in light of stratigraphic evidence and new radiocarbon dates, indicating a date closer to 1,000 BCE for the earliest Ban Chiang bronzes (Higham 2014: 137), it nonetheless represents an early attempt to situate Ban Chiang within a broader trans-regional framework of technological exchange.

Amid this critical reevaluation, subsequent radiocarbon recalibrations and stratigraphic reviews have contested these early claims, shifting attention away from models of direct external influence at Ban Chiang. Instead, recent scholarship reframes the site's heterogeneous, community-oriented craft production, where copper-base metalworking was practiced as part of household and village life rather than driven by elites or direct foreign transmission. In this light, Ban Chiang emerges not only as a key site for understanding regional metallurgical development in Southeast Asia, but also as a valuable case study within global histories of early technology in non-hierarchical societies. Coupled with Ban Chiang's exceptionally rich and well-preserved archeological record, this evolving perspective has significantly shaped the direction of scholarship on the site. What began as a focused inquiry into local metal production has developed into a multidisciplinary research program. The site's deep stratigraphy offers a rare opportunity to investigate long-term processes of technological innovation, social organization, and interregional interaction associated with a community-based metal industry, both within Thailand and in broader comparative contexts.

The interpretive insights from decades of investigating the Ban Chiang assemblage, particularly the early bronze discoveries, stratigraphic depth, and evolving analytical questions, have provided the intellectual foundation for the Ban Chiang monograph series. Conceived as a formal synthesis of long-term fieldwork and scholarly collaboration, this series reflects a sustained effort to document and interpret the site's historical and cultural significance from multiple disciplinary perspectives. Unified by a focus on revisiting earlier assumptions, refining methodologies, and integrating diverse evidence, each of the volumes in the Ban Chiang II series contributes distinct analytical perspectives.

Volume 2A reevaluates previous chronological models using refined dating techniques and contextual analysis, advancing a nuanced, interdisciplinary framework highlighting local innovation and grassroots technological development over earlier diffusionist models. Volume 2B explores the production, use, and deposition of metal artifacts at Ban Chiang and other sites in northeast Thailand, situating technological choices within a broader regional context and underscoring community-level adaptations in a non-hierarchical social landscape. Volume 2C expands the scope through geochemical data from prehistoric mining sites in Thailand and Laos,

using lead isotope analysis to investigate resource procurement and interregional exchange networks.

Volume 2D, under review here, developed in conjunction with these earlier Ban Chiang volumes, extends these interpretive frameworks to offer a comprehensive, context-sensitive catalog of metal and metal-related artifacts from the four northeast Thailand sites. It comprises eight chapters, consisting of interpretive text, detailed catalog entries, high-resolution line drawings, photomicrographs, and concordance tables documenting 639 metal artifacts and 102 crucible fragments. Unlike general exhibition catalogs such as *Ban Chiang: Discovery of a Lost Bronze Age* by Joyce White (1982), *Ban Chiang Volume 2D* is a specialized research tool. It integrates artifact data with chronological, contextual, typological, material, and technical information, supporting multi-dimensional inquiries into ancient metal production and use at Ban Chiang. From the outset, *Ban Chiang Volume 2D* presumes familiarity with the chronological, typological, and analytical foundations established in the preceding volumes, reinforcing its role as a comparative resource within the unified analytical framework of the Ban Chiang series.

Chapter 1 (pp. 1–10) opens with "Content and Organization", explaining the organizational system used to present the artifacts, outlining a nested hierarchical framework situating items within site-specific and regional interpretive contexts. At the highest level, artifacts are organized by site, distinguishing materials from the main Ban Chiang site and its adjacent East Soils area (BCES) from those of three smaller test sites: Ban Phak Top, Ban Tong, and Don Klang. This arrangement underscores Ban Chiang's status as the most intensively investigated site and establishes it as a comparative baseline for regional metallurgical research, accommodating both technological and social analyses.

The next level of classification organizes artifacts chronologically within each site, employing a revised framework of Early, Middle, and Late periods that intentionally avoids strict reliance on absolute dates. The rationale for this chronological scheme is discussed in Volume 2A, Chapter 2, rather than in the present chapter. Within each period, artifacts are presented in sequence from the earliest and further grouped by context, distinguishing burial from non-burial settings and categorizing items as grave goods, burial-associated materials, feature-related objects, or general soil deposits. Beyond these contextual groupings, classification proceeds according to typological features, arranging metal artifacts by morphology into categories such as ornaments, tools, weapons, and an "other" group for fragmentary or ambiguous pieces. Material type (e.g., copper-base alloys, iron) is also considered. Where possible, functional interpretations are offered, though the editors appropriately acknowledge that the functions of some incomplete or eroded items remain speculative. Crucibles are classified separately, underscoring their technological significance within the assemblage. This layered classification ensures a consistent, multi-dimensional framework across all sites.

Following this classification outline, the *"Key to the Individual Artifact Entries"* helps readers navigate the catalog by clarifying the standardized format used throughout. Each entry begins with core information: an artifact ID (indicating the site or excavation area), a small find number (the unique field number assigned during excavation to individually recorded artifacts), provenience details (such as excavation area, layer, square, and depth), and the sample's current location. Building on this foundation, the catalog further provides information on the chronological period, context type (e.g., burial-associated, feature, or general soil matrix), typology, measurements, material composition, and condition of each artifact. Additional details such as manufacturing traces, use-wear, repair evidence, and other technological features are also incorporated. When available, integrated analytical data from elemental, metallographic, and lead isotope analyses further enrich the entries. Complementary visual aids, including high-resolution line drawings and photomicrographs presented in later chapters, support precise morphological and technological study. This standardized structure accommodates variability within the dataset, weaving descriptive, contextual, and analytical elements into a cohesive narrative at the artifact-entry level—a structure echoed in the broader design of the catalog.

The sections *"Content and Organization"* (pp. 1–7) and *"Key to the Individual Artifact Entries"* (pp. 7–10) together provide a robust framework for navigating the catalog, facilitating both detailed artifact study and broader regional analysis. The complexity of the multi-layered system, combined with the absence of conventional visual guides (such as alphanumeric labels or typographic variations), may initially challenge readers—even those familiar with Ban Chiang research—but this reflects a deliberate editorial choice. The cohesive, continuous narrative underscores the volume's integrative approach and encourages readers to engage with the artifact data as an interconnected whole rather than in fragmented sections. Importantly, this approach propels readers toward the two major groups of artifact entries presented in Chapters 2 (pp. 11–87) and 3 (pp. 88–122), where the layered, nested hierarchy is applied in practice. Through this exploratory process, readers become familiar with the utility of the catalog's structure and its capacity to reveal technological, social, and regional insights that transcend simple data aggregation.

Chapter 4 (pp. 123–124) presents the catalog of analyzed crucibles and slag prills, organized according to the same nested hierarchy applied to the metal artifacts. It incorporates results from elemental and metallographic analyses, reflecting the volume's integrated approach. Chapter 5 (pp. 125–125) supplements the catalog with modern materials recovered during excavation—items typically excluded from site reports. Their inclusion demonstrates the editors' commitment to comprehensive documentation and analytical transparency and demonstrates that these intrusions were carefully recorded and distinguished from undisturbed ancient contexts, thereby affirming the stratigraphic integrity of the site. Chapters 6 (pp. 126–151) and 7 (pp. 152–202) provide supporting illustrations, including line

drawings and photomicrographs, which facilitate detailed morphological and technological analysis. Chapter 8 (pp. 203–290) introduces an extensive concordance table system that links multiple data dimensions (chronological, contextual, typological, and material) in a dynamic, integrative format. The tables are structured to enable searching and cross-referencing by artifact ID, period, and artifact class combined with period, allowing readers to locate individual items using any of these identifiers. Photomicrographs are similarly indexed in concordance tables (Tables 5–7), arranged by artifact ID, period, and artifact class with period, respectively. This concordance system serves as more than an index; it functions as a mapping tool that connects descriptive records with analytical frameworks, enabling users to navigate and compare the dataset from multiple perspectives with precision.

Ban Chiang, Northeast Thailand, Volume 2D sets a landmark in the documentation and analysis of prehistoric metallurgy in Southeast Asia. By operationalizing the methodological and theoretical innovations developed across the earlier Ban Chiang volumes, this catalog offers not just a comprehensive record of metal artifacts, but also a dynamic analytical tool that integrates stratigraphic, contextual, typological, and technological data. Its multi-layered analytical system provides a model for future comparative studies, particularly of non-hierarchical, community-based metallurgical traditions across upland Southeast Asia and neighboring areas. Notably, this book offers an exemplary methodological framework for investigating patterns of interaction and technological transmission within the upland zones near the upper and middle Mekong basin, including parts of Southwest China where archeological data on prehistoric metalworking sites are increasingly underpinned by secure chronological frameworks (Pryce et al. 2022; Yao et al. 2020). Comparative studies that integrate metallurgical data from these areas with that of Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar promise to shed new light on prehistoric communication networks and the mechanisms of technological transmission and exchange across this interconnected landscape. The volume's commitment to analytical transparency, methodological rigor, and the integration of diverse forms of evidence makes it an indispensable resource for scholars seeking to advance our understanding of prehistoric technology, social organization, and interregional interaction. As such, *Ban Chiang Volume 2D* stands as both the culmination of decades of dedicated research and a foundation for future inquiry into the complex trajectories of early metal production in the broader region.

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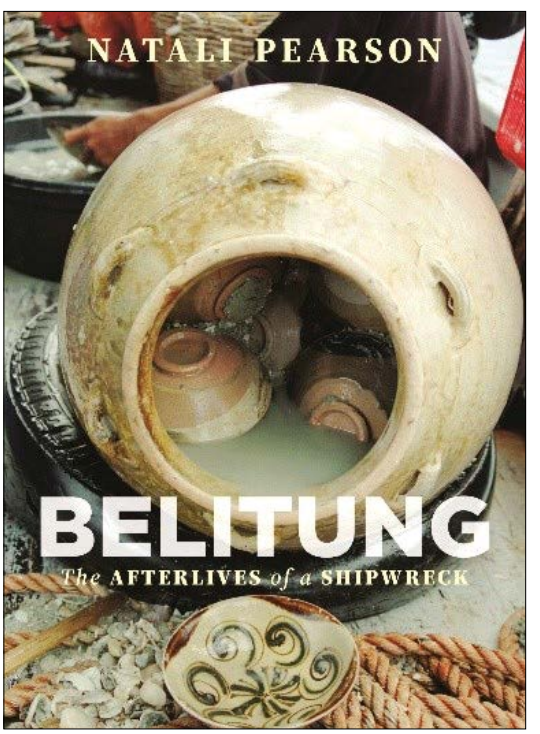
Natali Pearson, *Belitung: The Afterlives of a Shipwreck*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2022, 230 pages, US$68, ISBN 978–0824892944 (Hardback)



This compact, concise book tells the story of the Belitung shipwreck, framed through the lens of its afterlives. This wreck, also known as the Tang shipwreck or cargo, or the Batu Hitam wreck, was discovered in 1998 off the coast of Belitung Island, Sumatra, in waters belonging to the present-day nation state of Indonesia. From the moment of its discovery, it has been a site of contestation and controversy, but also of major archeological and art historical significance. The author, Natali Pearson, skillfully navigates these choppy epistemological waters, guiding the reader on a voyage through the key events, moments, and flashpoints of this story both ancient and modern.

Before I embark on this review, a note on my own positionality vis-à-vis the Belitung wreck. From July 2014 until October 2020, I was senior curator for Southeast Asia and Curator-in-Charge of the Belitung wreck at the

Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM), Singapore. I curated the first installation of the gallery in 2015 and thus have intimate knowledge of the collection, display, and an undeniably vested interest in any analysis or commentary thereof. I would, however, argue that this background also places me in a unique position to review this publication.

The book is a streamlined version of Pearson's PhD dissertation from the University of Sydney (2018). She balances the trade-off between readability and density of content with aplomb. The volume is divided into an introduction, followed by five chapters using pithy, single word titles—"Created" (Chapter 1), "Wrecked" (Chapter 2), "Provenanced" (Chapter 3), "Contested" (Chapter 4), and "Reimagined" (Chapter 5), each representing one of the Belitung's "afterlives"—and a conclusion.

The Introduction (pp. 1–16) begins in 1998 with the fall of the twenty-year dictatorship of Indonesian President Suharto (in office, 1967–1998); the Belitung wreck was discovered during this volatile and unstable period. Explaining that the Indonesian government licensed the wreck's recovery to a commercial salvage company which later sold it to Singapore in 2005, Pearson foreshadows the ensuing major events and controversies. She highlights that although this approach subverted the principles of the UNESCO 2001 Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage passed three years later, it did result in the survival of a largely intact cargo that was subsequently placed on display and accessible to scholars and the public alike. At the beginning of her volume, Pearson poses one of the central questions of her book, "Did the end, in this case, justify the means?" (p. 2). By the conclusion, her answer to this question is largely yes, albeit with some major caveats.

The book positions itself within the emerging disciple of Critical Heritage Studies, a field particularly strong in Australian academia. Pearson, meanwhile, sets her stall out early:

> Should we think of these shipwrecks as an archaeological resource, or as an economic one? [...] The binary values ascribed to shipwrecks have contributed to their loss and destruction, not their preservation. The absence of a considered and nuanced approach—a *critical* approach—to how underwater cultural heritage is valued has real consequences for how such heritage is managed [...]" (p. 3, italics in original).

From this point the discussion moves to challenge the understanding of heritage propagated by UNESCO, problematizing its doctrine of conservation over all else and its prioritization of certain forms and types of heritage over others, much of which is terrestrial and whose conceptualization has its origins in Western-centric models. Maritime heritage, she argues, does not neatly map onto these forms; disruption of established heritage discourse is one of the main characteristics of the new discipline of Critical Heritage Studies (p. 4). Pearson then explores the role of museums, arguing that despite their

potential shortcomings they play an essential role in the conservation and presentation of maritime heritage. In fact, Pearson argues that given the fraught nature of the debate between commercial salvage and archeological excavation, museums, which are already grappling with questions of decolonizing, repatriation, and restitution, are the ideal place for these difficult stories and contestations to play out and be resolved (p. 8). In her mind, the case of the Belitung wreck has forced museums to confront the issue of how to ethically exhibit underwater cultural heritage.

In this vein, Pearson advocates for an object biography approach as a way forward, asserting that museums must not only tell narratives of historical aspects, but also of how artifacts find their way into institutions. She frames this approach as "afterlives", though one may question to what extent this is the best term since it seems that their lives are very much "alive" throughout. The "afterlives" approach builds on the concept of object biographies and the social lives of objects first proposed by Arjun Appadurai (1986). The basic idea is that an object moves through different careers or "lives" as it shifts from one context to another. A religious image in a temple, for instance, lives a life as a statue under worship until it is at some later point redisplayed in an art museum where it then exists as a work of art.

These conceptualizations were, by and large, received positively in the following decades with many scholars and museums adopting such approaches. However, more recently anthropologist Dan Hicks (2020: 153) has challenged the object biography mantra, arguing that many Western museums use it to mask the inherent violence embedded in many artifacts in their collections. He points out that often object biographies are deployed to justify a museum's possession of an artifact. However, in the case of the Belitung wreck, Pearson is clearly arguing for the opposite. She advocates for the use of the object biography approach to reveal the troubled past lives of the artifacts in question. It would seem, therefore, that the object biography approach itself is not the issue, but its application.

Chapter 1 (pp. 17–38) starts off with the "first life" of the Belitung wreck, giving an overview of its history and importance in telling the story of maritime Asia in the 9th century CE. This is a narrative of connectivity, trade, and movement of peoples and ideas. The discussion then moves on to ship technology and tactfully avoids much of the jargon inherent in maritime archeology publications; it is thus easily accessible to the general reader and interested scholars alike. Here, Pearson follows the general consensus that sewn ship vessels such as the Belitung are most commonly found in the Arab world, especially Oman, as well as on the west coast of India. Evidence from the Phanom–Surin shipwreck found in Thailand in 2014 complicates this, however. This latter ship, also a sewn vessel built using techniques identical to the Belitung, is made of Southeast Asian materials. This raises the possibility that the ship building technique had been adapted by South-east Asian boatbuilders by the late first millennium ce. Alternatively, the vessel could have undergone extensive repairs

in the region. The chapter then gives a concise description of the Belitung cargo and its significance, drawing primarily on the two main existing catalogs on the collection (Krahl et al. 2011; Chong & Murphy 2017). Pearson raises the issue of the crew, pointing out that this is one of the areas where we have nothing but small glimpses of who they may have been; their story is largely absent.

Chapter 2 (pp. 39–62) first tackles the story of the wreck of the ship off Belitung Island to its discovery in the late 1990s. Pearson presents both the legal landscape of Indonesia and the international community regarding underwater cultural heritage. Importantly, she points out that the UNESCO 2001 Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage postdates the discovery and salvage and did not come into force until 2009 (p. 53). Even then, there was considerable disagreement about the priority it gives to *in situ* preservation. Perhaps the most important point to emerge from this discussion is that the salvage and recovery of the Belitung wreck were clearly legal at the time. Whether it was ethical or best practice is another matter and the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3 (pp. 63–83) focuses on the period between 1998 and 2005 when the cargo was finally sold. Pearson should be commended for her diligent research and detective work in recovering and documenting the history of the salvage operation. Doing so, she paints a clear picture of, at times, murky events. She addresses the criticism of the salvage head on and, in my opinion, rightly concludes that if it had not taken place, the wreck would have been looted and lost forever. This is the kernel of the matter regarding the controversies surrounding the Belitung wreck. Most scholars, myself and presumably Pearson too, would have wanted to see this shipwreck excavated archeologically under the highest scientific standards. However, as Pearson (p. 70) makes abundantly clear, this was not even remotely possible in Indonesia back in 1998. Salvage therefore was an imperfect solution to an intractable problem. One suspects that the salvage's relative success is part of the reason why it irks UNESCO and the more hardline sections of the maritime archeology community. The remainder of the chapter documents the negotiations and eventual sale of the collection to the Singapore Tourism Board in 2005 for US$32 million.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the latter afterlives of this collection as they enter into the realms of curation, display, and museumification. Chapter 4 (pp. 84–105) begins with an overview of the cataloging, initial temporary displays, and plans for a touring exhibition, as well as a quite detailed account of the role of the *Jewel of Muscat*—a reconstructed *dhow* that sailed from Oman to Singapore in 2010, echoing some of the presumed route of the original Belitung. The chapter next tackles the development of the planned touring exhibition. *Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds*, was a joint venture with the then Freer-Sackler Gallery (known today as The National Museum of Asian Art), Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Pearson carefully unpacks the events that led from its opening at the ArtScience Museum in Singapore on 19 February 2011, to the tempest that hit the planned and eventually cancelled

second leg at the Freer-Sackler Gallery. Tellingly, Pearson exposes the worrying neo-colonial attitudes exhibited by both the maritime archeologists at the Smithsonian and UNESCO towards Indonesia in particular and the wider Southeast Asian academic community more generally.

Chapter 5 (pp. 106–129) recounts the transfer of the collection from the Singapore Tourism Board to the National Heritage Board of Singapore in 2013 and the creation of a permanent home at the ACM, where in 2015 the Tang Shipwreck Gallery opened. She also documents the travelling shows and special exhibitions in which it played roles after that. She notes that the 2017 Asia Society New York show, for instance, did not face anywhere near the amount of criticism that the Freer–Sackler Gallery faced. This, she surmises, was due to the Asia Society providing a dedicated space to explaining the controversies of salvage and dealing with it head-on.

The Conclusion (pp. 130–138) begins with an emphatic statement, putting to bed once and for all any questions surrounding the legality of the recovery. As Pearson (p. 130) states, "[...] Indonesia was within its rights to determine the management of heritage in its territorial waters. Singapore, too, acted legally when it purchased the objects [...] through a statutory body of the Singaporean government [...]. In short, the *Belitung*'s salvage was not a heritage crime and these objects were not looted".

Perhaps the biggest complement I can pay this book (and by extension Pearson's PhD dissertation), is that I wish it had been published before I was tasked with curating the Belitung shipwreck. It would have been an invaluable guide to the intricacies, intrigues, and controversies that I myself spent many hours attempting to piece together once I took up my role as Curator-in-charge of the Tang Shipwreck Gallery in July 2014. Reading this publication has left me with a far clearer picture of the many lives of the collection inherited by the ACM. It has since aided me greatly in all of my interactions and engagements with the Belitung wreck and its many facets.

I highly recommend this publication to anyone interested in maritime archeology in Southeast Asia, the maritime Silk routes—past and present—, museums and the display of shipwrecks, the management and preservation of cultural heritage, and the myriad intersections between all of the above. The questions raised by the Belitung wreck are multi-faceted and necessitate careful consideration and honest, open debate. As Pearson's book has articulately shown, the wreck's many stories, be they controversial or celebratory, historical or contemporary, political or poetic, deserve to be told, not silenced.

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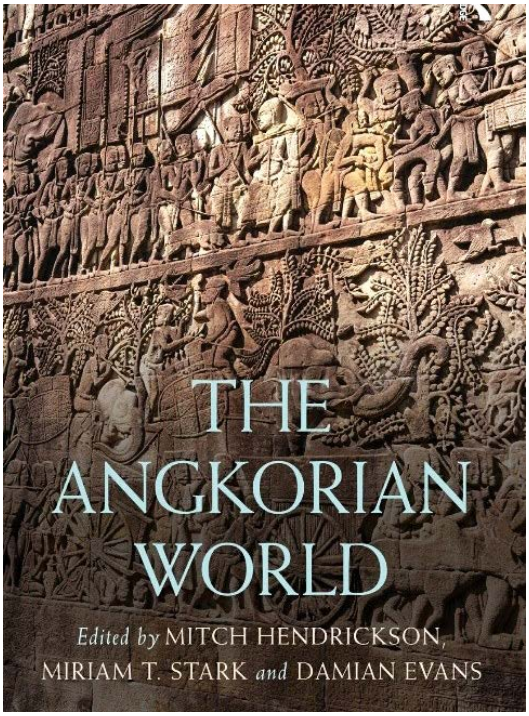
Mitch Hendrickson, Miriam T. Stark & Damian Evans, eds, *The Angkorian World*, Routledge, Oxon: New York, 2023, 626 pages, £172, ISBN 978–0815355953 (Hardback)



The Angkorian World consists of 35 chapters written by 90 authors. The volume is edited by Mitch Hendrickson, Miriam Stark, and the late Damian Evans (d. 2023), all of whom are outstanding scholars in the field. It represents the most comprehensive analysis of the Angkor empire in a single volume. Most of the book covers the period from Angkor's founding around 802 ce to the decline of Khmer power in the mid-15th century. There are brief sections on the pre-Angkor period and a more detailed section on the post-Angkor era. The book is divided into six parts: Contexts, Landscapes, State Institutions, Economies, Ideologies and Realities, and After Angkor. The wide range of material in *The Angkorian World* makes a brief review difficult. The book is a major contribution to Angkor studies and will serve as a key reference for many years due to its scope and diverse methods, making it a useful modular resource rather than a straightforward narrative. However, a deeper understanding of Angkor's prehistoric roots would have enhanced the work.

The volume opens with "Part I, Contexts", providing a range of information on rather varied topics from the environment, textual sources, researchers, and pre-Angkorian polities, as well as Angkor's external connections. The first chapter, by Dan Penny & Tegan Hall (Chapter 1, pp. 17–24), covers the environmental history of Angkor, focusing on the Tonle Sap floodplains, and also explores how regional climatic shifts, such as periods of instability and drought, may have contributed to the

decline of Angkor. The second chapter, by Dominique Soutif & Julia Estève (Chapter 2, pp. 25–41), discusses the literary sources of medieval Cambodia. Examining the corpus of Sanskrit and Old Khmer inscriptions, the authors emphasize the importance of inscriptions on smaller objects, as opposed to the traditional focus on lengthy inscriptions, which offer unique insights into ritual practices and a broader understanding of the cultural context of Angkor. One of the more notable chapters in this section aims to highlight the "invisible Cambodians" in Chapter 3 by Heng Piphal et al. (pp. 42–63). It is fitting to see a chapter focused on Cambodian researchers and helpers who were integral to the efforts of early archeologists, mostly French Nationals, in researching Angkor but who have largely gone unrecognized. Chapter 4 by Miriam Stark & Pierre-Yves Manguin (pp. 64–79) turns its attention to the Mekong Delta before Angkor. This is an important period in ancient Cambodian history; the Delta is the center of early state formation, as well as the site of interaction between India, China, and the wider world. The authors argue that the Mekong Delta played a crucial role in the later development of Angkor. Chapter 5 by Jean-Baptiste Chevance & Christophe Pottier (pp. 80–96) focuses on the early capitals of Angkor; the authors argue the importance of the earlier sites of Mahendraparvata, Hariharālaya, and Ak Yum in the evolution of Angkor. The next chapter, "Angkor's Multiple Southeast Asia Overland Connections" by Kenneth R. Hall (Chapter 6, pp. 97–111) examines the extensive overland networks that linked Angkor to various regions across mainland Southeast Asia. Drawing from archeological findings and epigraphic records, Hall illustrates how Angkor's influence extended through a series of constructed roads and pathways that complemented existing riverine and coastal routes. The final chapter in the first part, entitled "Angkor and China: 9th–15th Centuries" by Miriam Stark & Aedeen Cremin (Chapter 7, pp. 112–132), explores the multifaceted interactions between Angkor and successive Chinese dynasties over several centuries. The authors delve into the evolution of these relations, highlighting the shift from early overland connections to more robust maritime trade networks, particularly during the 10th to 12th centuries.

Part II, "Landscapes", offers detailed information on ecology, settlement patterns, and the development of urbanism in Angkorian Cambodia. Chapter 8 examines the plant ecology of Angkor. Here, Tegan Hall & Dan Penny (pp. 135–153) examine the intricate relationship between Angkor's urban development and its surrounding vegetation. The data come from analyzing bioarcheological material collected through coring and flotation of deposits, providing insights into the environment of the Angkorian people and their economy. Heng Piphal, in Chapter 9 (pp. 54–172), discusses the vital role of the Mekong River and its tributaries in providing sustenance for Angkor's population over time. Chapter 10, by Damien Evans et al. (pp. 173–194), titled "Trajectories of Urbanism in the Angkorian World", offers a thorough analysis of Angkor's settlement patterns and calls for a reevaluation of traditional urban definitions based on new archeo-

logical evidence. The theme of urbanism continues in the next chapter by Scott Hawken & Sarah Klassen (Chapter 11, pp. 195–215). The authors argue for combining archeological and anthropological evidence to emphasize the importance of Angkor's temple communities as distinct units within the city's urban fabric. The role of water in Angkor, a long-debated topic, is also revisited in Part II. The purpose of the massive reservoirs is critically examined in the final chapter by Terry Lustig et al. (Chapter 12, pp. 216–234), which considers whether they served practical functions or held symbolic meaning. The authors note that evidence for outlets that would allow irrigation is scarce; they conclude that the reservoirs likely had more symbolic significance, representing the king's power and reinforcing religious ideals.

In Part III, "State Institutions", various authors contribute to a range of topics. The first chapter in this section is "Angkorian Law and Land" by Tess Davis & Eileen Lustig (Chapter 13, pp. 237–253), which presents the legal frameworks governing land ownership and property rights during the Angkor period. Warfare and defence in the Angkorian world are explored in the following chapter by David Brotherson (Chapter 14, pp. 254–271). Brotherson focuses on the defensive aspects of the later Angkor period, including the formidable city walls of Angkor Thom. These, along with other engineered modifications in the landscape, suggest a strategic response to shifting regional powers and the need to protect the capital as Angkor's regional dominance began to wane. In Chapter 15, Chea Socheat et al. (pp. 272–286) explore the interplay between *āśrama*s, monastic retreats, and royal power. The authors argue that King Yaśovarman I's establishment of *āśrama*s or hermitage was a strategic instrument for consolidating royal power and delineating imperial boundaries. Finally, Chhem Rethy et al. offer an examination of education and medicine at Angkor between the 10th and 13th centuries (Chapter 16, pp. 287–306). The chapter highlights how state-sponsored religious hermitages and temple enclosures served as centers for both religious instruction and medical training.

Part IV, "Economies", examines Angkor's economy, with a focus on the role of temples and the agricultural base that provided much of the polity's wealth. This section includes a chapter by Eileen Lustig et al. discussing the impact of wealth transfer in Angkor (Chapter 17, pp. 309–326). The authors argue that the concentration of wealth among the elite, through land acquisitions and control over temple economies, led to increased demand for luxury goods and bolstered international trade from the 10th century onward. In Chapter 18, Heng Piphal & Sachchidanand Sahai review the temple economy of Angkor (pp. 327–337), arguing that temples functioned not only as religious centers but also as hubs of economic activity and social organization. Temples were endowed with land, labor, and resources, enabling them to operate semi-autonomously while simultaneously reinforcing the authority of the state. An analysis of Angkor's agricultural economy is presented in Chapter 19 by Scott Hawken & Cristina Cobo Castillo (pp. 338–359). They highlight how Angkor's low-density urban landscape

was interspersed with diverse agrarian spaces, including various rice cultivation methods, gardens, orchards, and other crop systems. In Hawken & Castillo's view, these agricultural zones were not peripheral but central to the city's functionality. A study of Angkor's quarries, which supplied the large quantities of stone used to construct the impressive buildings on the shores of the Tonle Sap Lake, is presented in Chapter 20. Here, Christian Fischer et al. (pp. 360–384) employ a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating petrographic analysis, geochemical data, and archeological evidence to trace the provenance and typology of sandstones used during the Angkor period. They argue that each type of stone was deliberately chosen for specific architectural elements and religious sculptures. In Chapter 21, Mitch Hendrickson et al. (pp. 385–400) explore the important role of high-temperature technologies in the Angkorian World. They examine the production of stoneware and iron, which met practical needs but, they argue, also contributed to the formation of Khmer identity. The final chapter in this section by Cristina Cobo Castillo focuses on "Food, Craft, and Ritual" in the Angkor period (Chapter 22, pp. 401–420). Here, the author presents archeobotanical evidence from several Angkor sites, demonstrating that rice was the predominant crop, but one that was supplemented by a diverse array of plants, representing a complex plant economy at Angkor.

Part V, "Ideologies and Realities", covers a wide range of topics, including Angkorian deities and temples (Chapter 23 by Julia Estève, pp. 423–434). Here, Estève challenges the traditional view of Angkorian religion as a syncretic blend of Hinduism, Buddhism, and animism, instead arguing that it is understood through a lens of pluralism. In Chapter 24, Paul A. Lavy & Martin Polkinghorne (pp. 435–458) offer an in-depth exploration of the religious, political, cultural, and technological dimensions of Angkorian statuary. In Chapter 25, Mitch Hendrickson et al. discuss the significance of cattle at Angkor (pp. 459–478). The authors examine how these animals were central to Angkor's economy, religion, and symbolism. The question of Angkor as a nation is examined in Chapter 26 by Ian Lowman et al. (pp. 479–493). Through the analysis of material culture and inscriptions, the authors explore whether the Angkorian heartland functioned as a unified political and cultural entity or was more a flexible network of settlements, temples, and roads centered around the capital. Domestic arrangements and residential patterns, deciphered through archeological research, are analyzed in Chapter 27 by Alison K. Carter et al. (pp. 494–507). This chapter offers a nuanced understanding of Angkorian society, emphasizing the importance of household archeology in reconstructing the lived experiences of the Khmer people. The final two chapters in Part V investigate the fashions of Angkor (Chapter 28 by Gillian Green, pp. 508–524), based on bas-relief, statuary, and literary references, and explore gender roles within the kingdom (Chapter 29 by Trude Jacobsen Gidaszewski, pp. 525–538). This section offers intriguing insights into daily life and provides a detailed look at the social and economic relationships between communities and temples.

The last section, Part VI, is dedicated to the post-Angkorian period. Chapter 30 by Damian Evans et al. (pp. 541–553) concerns the long-debated "collapse" of Angkor and the Khmer empire. Drawing on literature and more recent archeological research to revisit the topic, it paints a picture of a slow decline rather than the dramatic collapse that has traditionally been accepted. The authors argue that the Siamese invasion in the 15th century may have only been part of the cause. Monsoon variability and the erosion of the intricate water infrastructure system may have also played a significant role. The impact of climate change, political instability, and external pressures on the collapse of Angkor's urban centers and the dispersal of its population is explored. Also in this section, Pipad Krajaejun (Chapter 31, pp. 554–573) examines the influence of Angkor on the development of the Uthong style, which is recognized in Thailand. Ashley Thompson (Chapter 32, pp. 574–591) provides an analysis of the legacy of Angkorian King Jayavarman VII within the broader context of Southeast Asia. In Chapter 33, Martin Polkinghorne & Yuni Sato draw the reader's attention to early modern Cambodia, focusing on the post-Angkorian capital of Longvek (pp. 592–613). The penultimate chapter, penned by Ang Choulean (Chapter 34, pp. 614–628), discusses the role of the Hindu deity Yama (the god of death) in Khmer culture. The section concludes with a chapter by Penny Edwards (Chapter 35, pp. 629–644) which explores how Angkor has been represented and reimagined in modern Cambodian literature and music.

The reader of this volume is treated to a truly multidisciplinary approach to Angkor. The authors, leading scholars in archeology, archeobotany, religion, art history, and anthropology, thoroughly examine the Angkor empire, covering its rise, artistic and architectural grandeur, religious and cultural dynamics, and decline. The volume condenses years of meticulous research in these various fields and the editors have done an excellent job curating a comprehensive and interdisciplinary collection of research on the Angkorian civilization. One topic that is not included is an exploration of the Prehistoric roots of the Angkorian polity. The editors attribute the puzzling omission of information on the local Iron Age societies from which Angkor sprang to space considerations. However, given that the post-Angkorian period is included, this makes the decision curious.

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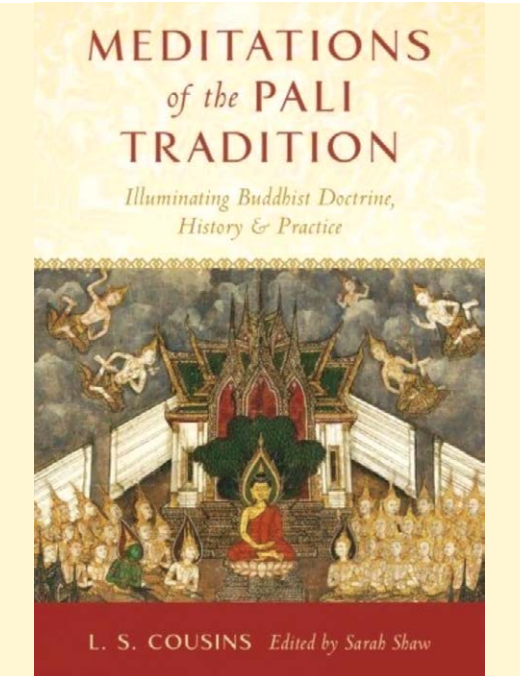
L.S. Cousins, ed. by Sarah Shaw, *Meditations of the Pali Tradition: Illuminating Buddhist Doctrine, History & Practice*, Boulder: Shambhala Publications Inc., 2022, 299 pages, US$24.95, ISBN 978–1611809879 (Paperback)



This book, posthumously published, is a welcome addition to the academic literature on Buddhist meditation. Skillfully edited into its final form by Sarah Shaw, after Lance Cousins's death in 2015, it contains eleven chapters accompanied by additional material supplied by the editor: an introduction containing autobiographical elements and personal reflections plus appendices on sources and references. Although the focus is on texts and practices transmitted within the Theravada tradition, the title does not entirely capture the book's breadth. References to "northern" Sanskrit sources are scattered throughout and an entire chapter is devoted to the so-called "Yogalehrbuch", an early medieval meditation manual from the Silk Road. As such, this book stands alone in its comprehensive coverage of Buddhist meditation, ancient and modern, focusing mostly on Pali texts and traditions, while also incorporating sources from northern India and beyond.

The strength of this approach lies in situating Theravada within a pan-Indic world of meditation dating from the earliest times: the impression created is of a tradition that has ebbed and flowed through the centuries, evolving over the course of time but without major discontinuities or ruptures. On this reading, meditation in the Indo-Theravada sphere is defined by creative continuity, with inherited practices adapted and extended in successive epochs, resulting in interrelated forms of calm-insight meditation.

Seven chapters (Chapters 1–6, 11) explore the Pali suttas and commentaries, culminating in a translation of Buddhadatta's treatment of *jhāna* ("meditation") in his "Entrance to Abhidhamma" (*Abhidhammāvatāra*, ca. 4th–5th century ce). The four penultimate chapters (Chapters 7–10), which cover the Yogalehrbuch (Chapter 7), the so called "*porāṇa/boran*" tradition (Chapter 8), and varieties of calm-insight practice in modern Theravada (Chapters 9–10), are general overviews which could be set as reading material on university courses. The juxtaposition of Chapters 7 and 8 also brings to light certain affinities between the Yogalehrbuch and the presumably esoteric "ancient" (*porāṇa/boran*) tradition, despite the chronological and geographical distance between them.[1]

[1] For a recent reassessment of this so-called *porāṇa/boran* or *kammatthan* tradition, see Kourilsky 2024.

Chapters 1–6 contain the book's most important material and constitute an original attempt to understand different aspects of early Buddhist meditation, including *jhāna* (Chapters 1–2), formless meditation (Chapter 3), mindfulness of breathing (Chapter 6), and the relationship between calm and insight (Chapters 4–5). Cousins's general approach to these subjects could be said to be quasi-exegetical, with a blend of canon and commentary providing the foundations for a singular understanding of meditation.

Cousins's reading of *jhāna* is broadly in line with his interpretation of *samādhi* ("concentration", p. 41): "literally the placing (*dhi*< √*dhā*) [of the mind] on (*ā*) [an object] in an integrated way (*sam*)". He believes that the commentarial distinction between "approach" (*upacāra*) and "full" concentration (*appanā*) is "implicit" in the canonical accounts (pp. 17, 33). He thus assumes (pp. 32–33) that the five hindrances—starting with "desire for objects of the five senses" (*kāmacchanda*)—are abandoned through concentration on an inner object and that (pp. 38–39) the first *jhāna* is a state in which an object is focused on (*vitakka*) and then examined (*vicāra*). Following the full immersion of the second *jhāna*, the third and fourth *jhāna*s are presented as increasingly subtle inner states, in which the *bhikkhu* or monk becomes "more alert" (p. 47).

It must be pointed out that such an interpretation of *jhāna* is not made explicit in the canonical texts. No Pali sutta explains the term *samādhi* in Cousins's idiosyncratic fashion (which is a sort of exegesis, rather than a philological analysis); the standard description of the four *jhāna*s does not mention any object of concentration. Cousins's understanding of the process by which the five hindrances are abandoned is also questionable. In the *jhāna* account itself, rather than summary lists, the first hindrance is always termed *abhijjhā*, "sensual longing", the abandoning of which suggests a subtle psychological change rather than any concentrative practice. Indeed, since the *bhikkhu*'s separation from *kāma* (desire) in the first *jhāna* is synonymous with his separation from "unskillful states" (*vivicca akusalehi dhammehi*), the initial process of *jhāna* would seem to be one of abandoning certain mental states rather than shutting down transitive consciousness (of which nothing is said). Even if the first *jhāna* is a "special state" (p. 41), one that is "radically different from ordinary consciousness" (p. 35), Cousins's lengthy arguments (pp. 34–45) do not show that it must be a state of inner concentration.

Cousins cites some, but not much, canonical support for his reading of *jhāna*, for example on the one hand (pp. 16, 38–39), a threefold classification of *samādhi* in which *vitakka* is distinguished from *vicāra* (1. with *vitakka* and *vicāra*; 2. without *vitakka* but with *vicāra*; 3. without either). He also notes (pp. 35–36) that in the *Mahāvedallasutta* (M 43) the first *jhāna* is said to be "endowed with five factors" (M I 294: *pañcaṅgasamannāgataṃ*): *vitakka*, *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukha* and *cittekaggatā*. However, the textual evidence for both points is extremely limited.[2] On the other hand,

[2] On the tripartite classification of *samādhi*, see D III 219, D III 274, M III 201, S IV 360, S IV 363, A IV 300–301. These texts, most of which are relatively late, do not connect the tripartite classification of *samādhi* to a non-Buddhist tradition, as Cousins claims. For texts

the principle of synonymity is a standard feature of Pali prose (Gombrich 1996: 116) and there is no reason why it should not be applied to the *jhāna*s. In doing so, "sensual desire" (*kāma*) would be read as equivalent to "unskillful states" (*akusala dhamma*s) in the first *jhāna*; *vitakka* and *vicāra* would be taken as near-synonyms in the second *jhāna*; and the terms used in the third and fourth *jhāna*s (*upekkhako, sato sampajāno, upekkhāsatipārisuddhi*, etc.) would merely describe a general process of deepening mindfulness, culminating in a refined state of transitive consciousness.

A reading of *jhāna* along these lines has been proposed by Gombrich (1997: 10) and is supported by texts such as M 38, in which the *bhikkhu* apparently cognizes sense objects in the fourth *jhāna* (M I 270). This reading is also suggested by texts which place the *jhāna*s before the formless states, where the progression beyond the fourth *jhāna* requires that perceptions of "form, objectivity, or diversity" are transcended (e.g., D I 183). With regard to the latter, Cousins notes that "[s]ome see this as allowing that sense functioning of some type can exist at lower levels of *jhāna*" (p. 39). But what else could it mean? The account of moving from the fourth *jhāna* to the "sphere of infinite space" (*ākāsānañcāyatana*) suggests that the two lists of meditative states, the *jhāna*s and the formless spheres, were regarded in the canonical period as quite different.

A similar point follows from the canonical claim that the four *jhāna*s were the Buddha's original discovery, something he "awakened to" (S I 48: *yo jhānam abuddhi/abujjhi*; also Polak 2011: 170–171). Indeed, biographical texts on the Bodhisatta's path to awakening state that at the culmination of his strivings, he remembered a childhood experience of *jhāna* while sitting in the shade of a rose-apple tree as his father worked (e.g., M I 246). For some reason, however, Cousins situates this episode at the beginning of the Bodhisatta's path, as a "meditational experience" under Āḷāra Kālāma "that led to the decision to take up his spiritual quest" (p. 53). This strange deviation from the texts is not explained, but it does allow Cousins to present the historical Buddha as more of a spiritual reformer than an innovator. He thus believes (p. 71, referring back to the discussion on pp. 55–56) that formless meditation was probably "part of the earliest teachings of Buddhism", having been incorporated into Buddhist Dhamma by the Buddha himself (pp. 70, 72).

Nobody doubts that formless meditation was a pre-Buddhist practice, borrowed and adapted at some point by the Buddha or his followers. But there is no evidence whatsoever (pp. 69–70) that, before the awakening, the Bodhisatta was taught the "spheres of totality" (*kasiṇāyatana*s), the "spheres of mastery" (*abhibhāyatana*s), the "seven abidings of consciousness" (*viññāṇaṭṭhiti*s), and a pre-*jhānic* classification of *samādhi* from Āḷāra Kālāma, whereas Uddaka Rāmaputta taught him "three types of perception" and the "seven abodes of beings". Nor is there any evidence, as Cousins believes, that in the canonical period, the practice of mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*) included the formless spheres (see p. 123 on the third tetrad of M 118).

besides M 43, which state discrete factors of *jhāna*s, include M 111 and A 5.28.

Thus Cousins's analysis of *jhāna*, formless meditation and mindfulness of breathing (Chapters 1–3, 6), although accompanied by an impressive array of citations, goes beyond the canonical texts. What emerges is an original system of its own. The same can be seen in the chapters on calm and its relationship to insight (Chapters 4–5), for example in Cousins's analysis of those "freed by wisdom" (*paññāvimutti*) and "freed in both respects" (*ubhatobhāgavimutti*). Table 4 (p. 79) presents a list of seven spiritual aspirants culminating in these concepts, which is analysed in terms of the four different paths and fruits (from stream-enterer to arahant). While purporting to contain the content of a canonical text (A 7.14; IV 10–11), the information on paths and fruits in fact comes from the commentary (Mp IV 3ff).

Cousins goes on to claim (p. 85) that there is "no contradiction" between the lists of seven aspirants as presented in the *Kīṭāgirisutta* (M 70; I 477–478) and *Mahānidānasutta* (D 15; II 68–71). But this judgment directly contradicts the statement of D 15 that "there is no *other* release on both sides higher and superior to *this* release on both sides" (D II 71; emphasis added). In other words, the composers of D 15 were certainly aware of different points of view on this matter. Furthermore, Cousins's claim that "the *arahat* liberated by wisdom" (*paññāvimutta*) experiences the formless meditations (p. 85) also contradicts the statement of M 70 that the one "liberated by wisdom" has no such experience of the formless states (M I 477). In the end, in his attempts to explain the difference between "release by wisdom" (*paññāvimutti*) and "release on both sides", Cousins synthesizes a plurality of canonical opinions into a position not stated in any text (pp. 82–85).

An original system can also be seen in Cousins's contention (pp. 56ff) that "the Buddhist meditative system is based on the five aggregates", by which he means that the four *jhāna*s are related to feelings (*vedanā*, the second aggregate), the formless states to apperception/recognition (*saññā*), and the fourth and fifth aggregates (constructions and consciousness) to insight meditation. Although Sanskrit sources (the *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya* and *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*) are cited in this context (p. 59, nn. 13–14), the Pali canon and its commentaries do not support this scheme. In a similar vein, the "corkscrew analogy", which Cousins uses to explain the interrelation between calm and insight (pp. 108–109), and the diagram on the "stages of *jhāna*" (p. 52) are not the ideas of anyone in Buddhist history, but are the products of Cousins's exegetical creativity.

Meditations of the Pali Tradition is an original and highly learned study of Buddhist thought and practice. Utilizing an eclectic range of sources and taking a road less traveled, Cousins's work rewards a slow and careful reading. Nothing else sets out the classical Indic-Theravada understanding of meditation so clearly, connecting the classical Pali sources to the Yogalehrbuch, the so-called *porāṇa/boran* tradition, and much more. At the same time, Cousins is reluctant to discuss other points of view,[3] preferring to impose his own system on the canonical

[3] The book would have benefitted from discussing Gombrich 1996 and 1997, mentioned above, plus Polak 2011, and my own study (Wynne 2007).

texts. If theology is to become a part of Buddhist Studies, this fascinating book would be a good place to begin. But if the study of canonical Buddhist texts is to remain historical in focus, students of early Buddhism should use the first half of this book very carefully indeed.

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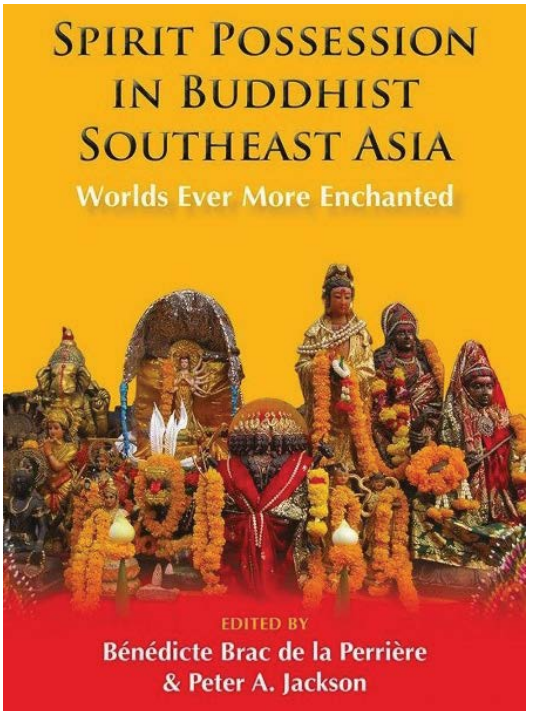
Bénédicte Brac de La Perrière & Peter A. Jackson, eds, *Spirit Possession in Buddhist Southeast Asia: Worlds Ever More Enchanted*, Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2022, 360 pages, US$31.99, ISBN 978–8776943103 (Paperback)



This edited volume presents a groundbreaking exploration of the flourishing practices of spirit possession, mediumship, and related rituals across mainland Southeast Asia. Drawing on ten case studies from Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Vietnam, the volume highlights how these practices thrive under contemporary conditions of neoliberal capitalism, state policies, and media globalization. The very knowledgeable introduction and each of the valuable contributions challenge enduring assumptions about modernity, disenchantment, and the boundaries of religious orthodoxy. The collection markedly contests the Weberian prediction of religious disenchantment in modern societies. Rather than receding with the rise of capitalism and state modernization, spirit cults have proliferated; the volume ultimately argues that spirit possession is not a vanishing relic of rural tradition but rather a vibrant, modern, and even mainstream practice in contemporary Southeast Asian societies. The volume frames this not as a paradox, but as evidence of a distinctive regional genealogy where "magical" practices thrive under and, sometimes, in cooperation with state structures. In countries such as Myanmar and Vietnam, spirit possession and mediumship have been recontextualized as heritage, contributing to nation-building projects rather than undermining them. In Thailand and Cambodia, spirit practices respond dynamically to modern consumerism and capitalist uncertainty. This argument not only refutes traditional Western narratives of secularization, but places Southeast Asia at the vanguard of debates about how religious vitality adapts and flourishes under modernity.

Several recurrent themes emerge in the volume, including "State" and "Religion". In her own contribution, lead editor Bénédicte Brac de La Perrière (Chapter 2, pp. 69–97) details the cult of Mya Nan Nwe, a naga spirit whose popular veneration in Yangon evolved independently from the temple that housed her. This reflects how ritual traditions in Myanmar grow both in spatial autonomy and complexity when freed from institutional control. A major strength of the book lies in its attention to the state's role, not only as a suppressor but also as a facilitator and co-opting agent of spirit practices.

Paul Sorrentino's study (Chapter 1, pp. 42–68) of the Four Palaces cult in Vietnam demonstrates how state endorsement elevates spirit practices into national intangible heritage. The author shows that the dynamic between bureaucratic structures and local legends permits continuous reinvention of the pantheon. Similarly, Kazuo Fukuura (Chapter 4, pp. 119–143) describes how northern Thai authorities regulate mediums without eradicating their role.

One of the volume's other central contributions is its nuanced handling of the relationship between institutional Buddhism and spirit possession. Contrary to dichotomous framings, several chapters in the book reveal how monks act as mediums, or how spirit cults support Buddhist institutions. For example, Visisya Pinthongvijakul's work (Chapter 3, pp. 98–118) on Thai monks who operate as mediums undermines binary classifications between orthodox Buddhism and animist traditions. Irene Stengs (Chapter 9, pp. 232–252) takes this one step further by proposing a "continuum" of oneiric (dream-like) encounters, situating monks, mediums, and magicians within a shared cosmological field also in Thailand.

Drawing on Peter Jackson's insights on the commodification of "Thai religion" Megan Sinnott's contribution (Chapter 8, pp. 211–231) illustrates how spirit cults adapt to and reflect consumer trends. Her analysis of child spirits in Thailand—transformed from gruesome relics into sanitized, sentimental Luk Thep dolls (ตุ๊กตาลูกเทพ)—exemplifies how spirit practices shift in response to middle-class sensibilities. Similarly, Paul Christensen (Chapter 5, pp. 144–163) examines rituals that were once stigmatized as "superstition" or "blackmagic", but are now being rebranded to appeal to middle-class sensibilities, gaining public legitimacy in Cambodia. He depicts the functioning of Brahmanism as a pragmatic, prosperity-oriented tradition, raising broader questions about the morality of money, the shifting value of merit versus material wealth, and the changing role of virtue in contemporary Cambodian spirituality. Poonnatree Jiaviriyaboonya (Chapter 7, pp. 188–210), for her part, reflects on the emotional and psychological dimensions of fortune-telling through the case of a Cambodian student caught between studying abroad and familial obligations. Her analysis calls attention to the affective labor performed by mediums and the modern anxieties they mediate. Finally, Niklas Foxeus (Chapter 6, pp. 164–187), explores how lottery cults in Myanmar thrive amid economic precarity, reflecting a prosperity-oriented religiosity.

While most chapters tie spirit cults to modernity's conditions, Benjamin Baumann (Chapter 10, pp. 253–291) frames it as grounded in a persistent animist ontology that exists alongside Buddhist and naturalist paradigms without being subsumed by them. His theoretical chapter contributes a significant philosophical perspective by applying "new animism" and Wittgensteinian "language games". He asserts that spirit possession practices reflect a relational ontology in which personhood is "dividual"—composed of multiple social and spiritual relations—

rather than individual. This challenges Western models of coherent, bounded selves and introduces an ontological pluralism into the analysis of Southeast Asian religiosity.

By documenting the vibrancy of spirit cults, the volume challenges secularization theories and redefines Buddhism as a fluid, inclusive tradition. While the book could have further interrogated its own categories and power dynamics, its ethnographic richness and theoretical ambition make it an essential reading for scholars of religion, anthropology, and Southeast Asian studies. Its ten chapters offer deeply insightful and empirically grounded contributions that expand the conceptual and geographic horizons of the field. Through centering practices often dismissed as marginal, the volume initiates an academic move to rethink Buddhism "from its edges" as Erick White puts it in his Afterword (pp. 292–310). White invites us to further extend the stance to other fields such as fortune-telling, magic practices, sorcery, and the like. Yet, the volume will surely be a landmark and an essential reading for anyone interested in religion, modernity, and the evolving spiritual landscapes of mainland Southeast Asia, especially Thailand. Its greatest strength is its refusal to reduce spirit possession to a "relic" —instead portraying it as a living, evolving force in modern life. Together with its companion volume, *Divas and Deities* (Jackson & Baumann 2021), this work sets a new benchmark for studying enchantment in contemporary Asia.

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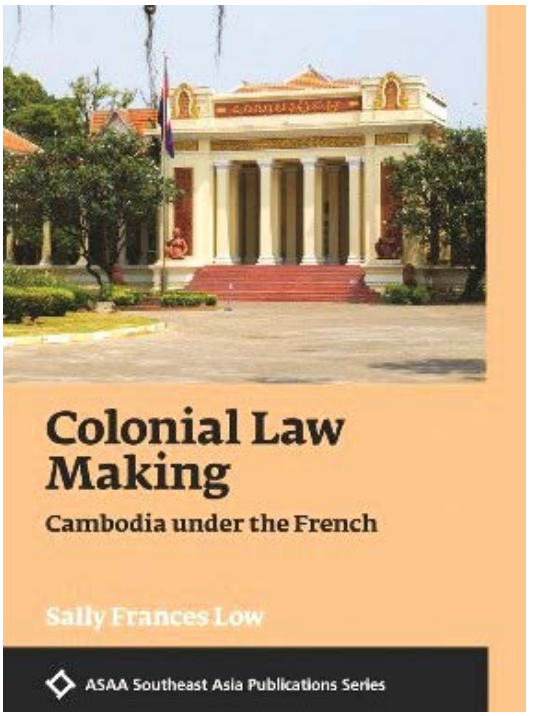
Sally Frances Low, *Colonial Law Making: Cambodia under the French*, Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2023, 276 pages, SGD$38, ISBN 978–9813252448 (Paperback)



Entrée en recherche après avoir œuvré au Cambodge dans le cadre de l'ONU au début des années 1990, Sally Frances Low inscrivit une thèse en 2012 sous la direction de David Chandler, dont ce livre, qui fait suite à un article publié précédemment (Low 2016), est l'aboutissement. S'il a pour intérêt d'aborder un sujet peu couru—la dimension juridique du Protectorat français du Cambodge jusque dans ses suites post-coloniales—il a pour défaut de le faire en des termes superficiels.

Après quatre listes (d'illustrations, de tableaux, de cartes et d'acronymes, pp. ix–xi, xv), deux cartes, l'une de l'Indochine française, l'autre du Cambodge (pp. xiii–xiv), puis un glossaire des termes khmers utilisés (à l'orthographe parfois fautive, pp. xvii–xix), le livre s'ouvre sur un avant-propos laudateur de Pip Nicholson, spécialiste du droit socialiste vietnamien de l'Université de Melbourne (pp. xxi–xxiii), suivi des remerciements d'usage (pp. xxv–xvi).

La thèse de l'auteur se déploie ensuite sur deux centaines de pages étayées par un peu moins de huit centaines de notes infrapaginales, ventilées en neuf chapitres d'une vingtaine de pages. Fondée essentiellement sur les archives françaises du Protectorat (ANOM et Archives nationales du Cambodge) et la littérature secondaire relative à cette période de l'histoire, elle vise à montrer les aspects juridiques de la domination coloniale à travers la fabrique d'un droit moderne et la mise en place d'institutions judiciaires reposant en partie sur le droit et les pratiques judiciaires autochtones, et impliquant de ce fait le concours des élites cambodgiennes qui conservèrent une relative autonomie dans cette opération.

Le chapitre introductif établit le cadre théorique de l'auteur en termes d'histoire du droit colonial, puis il rappelle la généralité du cadre juridique de l'Indochine française (pp. 1–26). Au Cambodge même, la volonté française de moderniser les codes juridiques autochtones plutôt que d'appliquer le droit français s'explique par le traité de Protectorat signé en 1863, dans lequel la France s'engageait à protéger la royauté et les traditions cambodgiennes, tout en reflétant la volonté de ménager les élites locales. La modernisation fut toutefois relative, en particulier concernant l'indépendance de la justice, les Français préférant entretenir un corps de juges

cambodgiens dépendants du pouvoir colonial. La réforme consista essentiellement en un transfert du contrôle régalien des juges et des cours de justice depuis la Couronne khmère vers l'administration du Protectorat. C'est cette juridiction indigène qui constitua le fondement du système juridique post-colonial, dont le roi Sihanouk (r. 1941–1955) attribua la paternité aux souverains qui l'avaient précédé plus qu'aux Français. Aidé de ses conseillers français, le jeune roi s'appuya sur cette invention (partielle) de la tradition pour écarter l'hypothèse d'une monarchie constitutionnelle en 1947 et ainsi renforcer l'assise institutionnelle de la Couronne, bientôt indépendante. C'est dans ce cadre interprétatif que l'auteur examine comment le Protectorat contribua à reformuler le droit, la tradition et l'identité des Cambodgiens.

Le deuxième chapitre dresse l'état des lieux institutionnels et juridique de la France et du royaume khmer au lendemain de la signature du Protectorat (pp. 27–49). Basé sur la littérature secondaire, ce panorama insiste sur les imaginaires distincts qui se sont rencontrés au sein de l'État de droit colonial pour déterminer le comportement des acteurs du domaine juridique : fonctionnaires républicains pétris de valeurs universelles et zélateurs d'une « Mission civilisatrice » d'une part, mandarins royalistes imprégnés de la notion de *karma* et de celle de hiérarchie statutaire d'autre part, s'affrontant ou se soutenant au gré des circonstances, dans tous les cas pris de plein pied dans une réalité quotidienne faite d'enjeux de pouvoir allant de la simple ambition professionnelle aux ressorts, plus complexes, de la domination coloniale. De ce point de vue, l'auteur distingue classiquement deux périodes : les trois premières décennies du Protectorat, de 1863 à 1897, durant lesquelles les élites cambodgiennes menées par le roi Norodom (r. 1860–1904) contestèrent les tentatives de prise de contrôle de l'administration cambodgienne par les Français ; et la période qui suivit (1897–1953), objet principal de ses recherches, durant laquelle se serait établi un *modus vivendi* entre élites autochtones et pouvoir colonial.

Le chapitre qui suit examine la progressive dépossession juridique du roi Norodom (pp. 50–76). Elle s'opère dès l'arrivée au Cambodge d'un personnel républicain qui force à de multiples reprises le droit. Il le fait d'abord en interprétant de manière biaisée l'article 7 du traité de 1863 stipulant la non-ingérence des Français dans la justice cambodgienne, en enjoignant ces derniers, logiquement soustraits à l'autorité des juges cambodgiens, à répondre judiciairement de leur extraterritorialité non devant une cour consulaire mais devant une cour cochinchinoise sous mandat colonial. Procédé bientôt élargi à tous les Européens et aux Asiatiques étrangers, Vietnamiens et Chinois notamment. De même, la juridiction mixte khméro-française chargée de juger les litiges impliquant étrangers et autochtones dépendra-t-elle d'une autorité coloniale et non consulaire. Cela n'alla certes pas sans l'acquiescement du roi et la signature d'ordonnances royales afférentes, obtenues par pressions successives. Jusqu'au point de rupture de 1884 où Norodom se refusa désormais

à signer. Le coup de force du gouverneur de Cochinchine Charles Thomson (1882–1886), qui pointa ses canons sur le palais pour obliger le roi à signer une convention achevant de le dépouiller de sa souveraineté, entraîna alors les révoltes que l'on sait, deux années durant. Et il fallut attendre 1897 et le second coup de force de Huyn de Verneville (1894–1897), prétextant cette fois de la maladie du roi, pour faire passer des réformes administratives et judiciaires.

À la fin de sa vie, Norodom signa l'institution d'une commission de révision des lois cambodgiennes, d'où sortirait une nouvelle codification en 1911 avec un *Code criminel*, un *Code de procédure criminelle et d'organisation judiciaire* et un *Code civil* (pp. 77–100). En révisant ces lois, les administrateurs coloniaux cherchèrent à limiter l'instrumentalisation de la justice par les élites cambodgiennes qui utilisaient les juridictions provinciales et centrales pour arbitrer leurs luttes factieuses, comme le montre une série d'affaires judiciaires impliquant d'importants personnages. Plus directement inspirée par les lois françaises, la nouvelle codification préservait cependant le rôle de la royauté comme source de la légalité. Le Conseil des ministres perdait son pouvoir de cassation, transféré à une cour de Cassation autonome avec bientôt un homme acquis aux Français à sa tête. En province, les tribunaux résidentiels étaient préservés, permettant au Résident supérieur de maintenir le pouvoir judiciaire dans l'escarcelle du pouvoir administratif et d'éviter que des juges français ne viennent l'en déposséder au nom de la séparation des pouvoirs.

La grande jacquerie de 1916 entraîna par contrecoup une nouvelle vague de réformes administratives et judiciaires (pp. 101–124). Les causes de cette jacquerie qui mena, selon les décomptes, entre 40 000 et 100 000 paysans à venir manifester leur mécontentement à Phnom Penh sont encore discutées par les historiens. Plusieurs facteurs peuvent l'expliquer comme l'introduction de la commune en 1908, éloignant l'administré du résident de province, ou les enrôlements de « volontaires » pour la Première Guerre mondiale. Mais la corvée de 90 jours exigée par le Protectorat pour construire un réseau de routes étendu en fut sans doute l'élément déclencheur, raison pour laquelle le roi Sisowath (r. 1904–1927) invita les administrateurs coloniaux à la clémence lors du procès qui s'ensuivit. L'année suivante, les Français ouvrirent une école de cadres pour mieux former les dignitaires cambodgiens et les divisèrent en deux corps, l'administration (*krum raṭṭhapāl*, ក្រមរដ្ឋបាល) et la justice (*krum tulākār*, ក្រមតុលាការ). Puis une cour provinciale de première instance (*sālā ṭampūṅ*, សាលាដំបូង) dirigée par un juge cambodgien et installée à proximité de la résidence provinciale fut instituée en 1922, en remplacement des tribunaux résidentiels.

L'auteur examine ensuite les conséquences de ces réformes, sans trancher entre les différentes thèses en présence dans la littérature secondaire (pp. 125–149). Pour Sorn Samnang, elles protégèrent la population cambodgienne de la corruption des dignitaires cambodgiens ; pour Alain Forest, elles permirent au contraire aux dignitaires de maintenir leur emprise sur le peuple ;

pour Pierre Brocheux et Daniel Hémery, elles intensifièrent son exploitation par les élites en déstabilisant les relations traditionnelles de patronage. Sally Low égrène ainsi les discours institutionnels qui confortent tour à tour l'une et l'autre de ces thèses, les comparant aux cas laotiens ou tonkinois, s'arrêtant au besoin sur les procès de citoyens français justiciables sur le sol cambodgien (avec les cas d'André Malraux, écroué en 1923, et du résident Bardez, assassiné en 1924), non sans s'appesantir sur la cérémonie d'inauguration du nouveau Palais de Justice le 25 avril 1925, à proximité du Palais royal, symbole du transfert du contrôle du pouvoir judiciaire depuis une juridiction cambodgienne vers l'administration française.

La représentation des justiciables par des avocats ne fut autorisée qu'en 1936 (pp. 150–165). Les « *methāvī* » (មេធាវី, avocats) portant cravate française et *sambat'* (សំពត់) cambodgien, furent institués suite aux pressions de militants de la Ligue des Droits de l'Homme. En 1940, Penn Nouth, l'un de ces avocats indigènes, rédigea un rapport circonstancié qui fut intercepté par la Sûreté parce qu'il dressait la liste des dysfonctionnements de cette fonction comme, plus généralement, du rendu de la justice : corruption systémique, codes inapplicables et incompréhensibles pour la plupart des juges indigènes, peu ou pas formés, inégalité raciale devant la justice selon que l'on était français, asiatique étranger ou cambodgien.

La période de l'indépendance qui connut l'institution d'un ordre constitutionnel fut pour l'auteur une continuation de l'État de droit colonial (pp. 166–193). Peu avant l'arrivée de l'amiral Decoux aux affaires (1940–1945), le Gouverneur général de l'Indochine Catroux (1939–1940) et le roi Monivong (r. 1927–1941) promulguèrent la première « loi » de l'Administration cambodgienne (*kram* n° 1), définissant les pouvoirs respectifs du roi et du Conseil des ministres, en ce qui s'apparentait à une réforme constitutionnelle, les lois indochinoises devant désormais passer par un *kram* (ក្រម) pour être appliquées au Cambodge. Lorsqu'à la faveur du coup de force japonais du 9 mars 1945 Sihanouk proclama une première fois l'indépendance, il promulgua à nouveau le *kram* n° 1 mais cette fois sans référence aux Français. Après la défaite japonaise, le *modus vivendi* franco-cambodgien de janvier 1946 faisait du Cambodge un pays associé au sein de l'Union française sous l'autorité d'un Commissaire de la République représentant la France et la fédération indochinoise, œuvrant à Phnom Penh comme conseiller du roi et disposant de la co-signature des lois et règlements avec ce dernier. La constitution de 1947, adoptée sous la pression du Parti Démocrate, fut d'abord modifiée par Sihanouk en 1952, puis à plusieurs reprises une fois l'indépendance obtenue, à chaque fois pour neutraliser le pouvoir législatif, que ce soit comme roi, ou comme chef de l'État après son abdication en 1955. La justice post-coloniale s'inscrivit par ailleurs dans une continuité coloniale : textes non appliqués, corruption systémique, pour un pouvoir judiciaire réduit au rôle d'auxiliaire du contrôle administratif par les élites qui l'exerçaient.

L'auteur fait finalement retour sur cette histoire séculaire dans un chapitre conclusif qui ouvre la comparaison aux

différents pays d'Asie du Sud-Est passés (ou pas) par une colonisation, mais aussi plus largement au sein des empires coloniaux (pp. 194–211). Outil classique de la domination coloniale, le droit imposé par les Français fut le résultat d'une négociation entre des intérêts divergents au sein de l'appareil colonial mais également entre ce dernier et les élites cambodgiennes. Associé à l'imaginaire de protection du trône, et fondé sur la fiction semi-légale que les Français gouvernaient au nom du roi, il contribua à l'émergence d'un droit national mêlant des formulations khmères et françaises. Mais, outil de la domination coloniale dans sa double dimension idéologique (la mission civilisatrice) et administrative, ce droit conforta aussi les élites cambodgiennes au service du Protectorat, aux dépens des petites gens. Une bibliographie et un index des noms et des notions viennent clore l'ouvrage.

Au cœur de la tension entre être et devoir-être constitutive du droit se trouvent les procédures, par où l'on peut observer la pénétration du droit dans une société (Thomas 2002 : 1427–1428) : les procès bien sûr, mais aussi les incarcérations, absentes du volume alors que le système carcéral est réputé voir le jour durant la période coloniale (Benaîche 2016). En se cantonnant à une analyse des discours juridiques en regard de quelques archives de la pratique judiciaire choisies pour les besoins de la démonstration, Low se condamne à ne traiter que l'écume du droit, au lieu de s'essayer à cerner de près les « opérations formelles du droit » (Thomas 2002 : 1428) dans une société travaillée non seulement par la domination coloniale mais encore par ses propres tensions, qui précèdent—et demeurent sous-jacentes à—la présence française. Cette analyse des discours est elle-même réduite à leur expression française, les sources cambodgiennes et le lexique cambodgien du droit ayant été étonnements écartés de l'étude ; ce sont eux qui auraient pourtant permis de mesurer de près la « localisation » de l'esprit et de la matière juridique françaises en terrain cambodgien. Sans parler des archives judiciaires cambodgiennes, la simple consultation de l'hebdomadaire *nagara vatta* (នគរវត្ត) aurait permis d'approcher la perception vernaculaire de la justice dans le milieu des fonctionnaires cambodgiens au service du Protectorat : l'une des rubriques n'était-elle pas signée « Le Juge lièvre » (*subhā dansāy*, សុភា ទន្សាយ) célèbre animal du légendaire cambodgien chargé de résoudre les affaires judiciaires insolubles (Népote 1986) ?

Mais même en ne considérant que la dimension francophone de ce discours, le grand absent du livre est sa contestation, en français dans le texte, par les élites cambodgiennes. En dehors d'un heureux passage sur Penn Nouth (pp. 156–163), auteur d'une vigoureuse critique des apories du système judiciaire (1940), Low ignore superbement les critiques cambodgiennes les plus virulentes (et précises) de l'ordre juridique colonial : qu'il s'agisse des pamphlets d'Areno Iukanthor publiés à Paris (1935 : 96–170), dans lesquels le prince cambodgien dénonce la corruption du pouvoir colonial et la « servilité de la justice » incarnée par le Résident supérieur Baudouin (1914–1927), impliquant, entre autres, Poc Hell, le Conseiller

de la cour de cassation (1935) ; ou encore de la thèse de droit de Au Chhieng (1941, publiée en 2023), citée du bout de la plume, comme pour mieux passer ses conclusions par pertes et profits. Le premier juriste cambodgien formé à la Faculté de droit de Paris ayant été proche des futurs démocrates, rédacteurs de la Constitution de 1947, l'examen de ses prises de position juridiques relatives à l'illégalité du Protectorat depuis la signature forcée de la Convention de 1884 n'aurait pourtant pas été un luxe[1].

Nonobstant ces critiques, qui montrent surtout que l'étude du droit cambodgien contemporain ne fait que commencer, il ne faut pas négliger de lire ce livre dans lequel on apprend un certain nombre de faits jusqu'ici inconnus.

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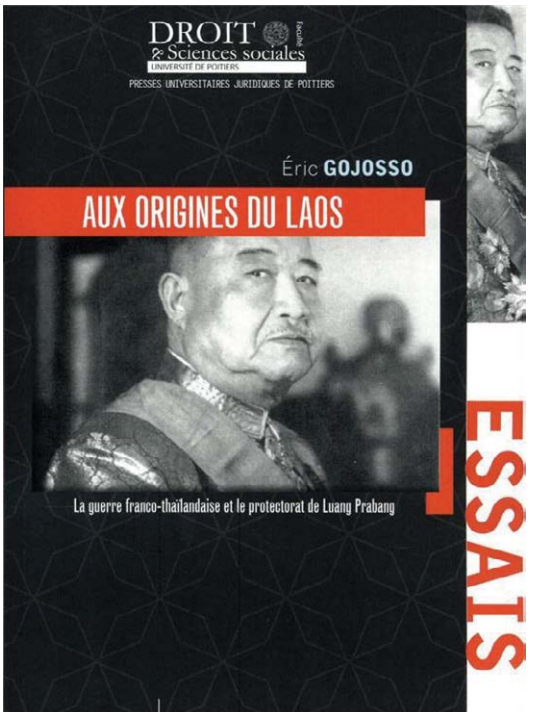
[1] On se permet ici de renvoyer à notre « Présentation de la thèse » (Au Chhieng 2023 : 147–153).

Éric Gojosso, *Aux Origines du Laos : La guerre franco-thaïlandaise et le protectorat de Luang Prabang*, Poitiers: Presses Universitaires Juridiques de Poitiers Droit et Sciences, 2023, 342 pages, €30, ISBN 978–2381940182 (Paperback)



In this book, written in French, but whose title could be translated as *The Origins of Laos: The Franco-Thai War and the Protectorate of Luang Prabang*, Éric Gojosso offers a critical examination of two distinct yet connected topics. The first is the diplomatic maneuverings surrounding the Franco–Thai War of 1941, both before and after the conflict. The second addresses the ambiguous legal status of Laos prior to its unification in 1946. By analyzing primary French contemporary writings and diplomatic records that have largely been overlooked in previous discussions of these topics, Gojosso sheds new light on these issues. Reflecting this dual focus, the book is organized into two parts.

In the initial section, the first five chapters (pp. 13–190), Gojosso offers an extensive analysis of the Franco–Thai War of 1941, a topic emphasized in the book's subtitle. The section delves into the negotiations between Thailand, France, and, subsequently, Japan. These negotiations involved altering the Mekong River boundary between Thailand and French Indochina, establishing a non-aggression pact, and later negotiations involving Japan after the Franco–Thai War. Consequently, France was forced to relinquish territories in present-day Laos and Cambodia to Thailand. By thoroughly examining French archival records, Gojosso rectifies what he perceives as an unjust and incorrect portrayal of France's role in the negotiations. He specifically critiques Thadeus Flood's classic and influential narrative (1967), which underscores French reluctance and delays in negotiations, as well as their retreat from initial commitments regarding significant changes to the Mekong boundary. Gojosso contends that Flood's account uncritically mirrors Thai nationalist propaganda. Referring to French records, Gojosso claims that France never intended to allow major boundary changes and that the apparent delay in French negotiations was due to the Pétain Government's relocation to Vichy in 1940. In doing so, Gojosso offers a revisionist perspective that challenges the "standard" accounts relying on Flood's version.

The second section of the book covers the three final chapters (pp. 191–290). Here the author turns his attention

to "the mysterious Laos" (the title of Chapter 6). The term "mysterious" refers to the unclear legal status of Laos and the Luang Prabang Kingdom leading up to the conclusion of World War II. Gojosso guides readers through a complex array of documents that offer different perspectives on whether these areas were a colony, protectorate, or a hybrid form of these within the French colonial empire. This topic is well-known in the existing literature on the history of Laos. However, Gojosso provides an exceptionally detailed exploration of this issue as reflected in contemporary writings and diplomatic records. In his analysis of these documents, the differing views on Laos's status mainly stem from the various interpretations of existing treaties and conventions by different French officials in Indochina and France. Occasionally, King Sisavang Vong of Luang Prabang also plays a role in these discussions. This happens either when French colonial administrators argue against making substantial changes to the kingdom's status by citing the king's loyalty to France or when the king himself offers support to France (e.g., pp. 203, 208). This inclusion of Lao agency offers a refreshing perspective in an otherwise French-centric diplomatic history.

The book is titled *Aux origines du Laos*; the rationale behind the title, as well as the connection between the focus on Laos and the initial nearly 200 pages discussing the Franco– Thai non-aggression pact and the Franco–Thai War, lies in Gojosso's emphasis on how the aftermath of the war and the French cession of the Mekong right-bank territories to Thailand enabled a transformation in the legal status and position of the Luang Prabang Kingdom within Laos. The Lao kingdom was forced to relinquish land on the right bank which contained valuable teak forests and the royal family's ancestral tombs. The king, under the threat of abdication, leveraged the situation to negotiate a new position for the kingdom, which included expanding its territory, formalizing its status as a protectorate, and establishing a new administrative apparatus. Although these changes did not unify Laos under the Luang Prabang king, they represented a significant step toward the eventual unification of Laos, which was achieved after World War II. Through this lens, the author contributes to the existing literature on French policies for a cultural renovation in Laos during World War II. While existing literature on this topic—including my own book, *Creating Laos* (2008)—typically emphasizes the cultural aspects of this campaign, Gojosso underscores the administrative and legal measures that were also part of this effort to lay the groundwork for a unified Laos.

The book lacks a conclusion that summarizes the overall argument and offers a final evaluation of the work as a whole. Although the last chapter includes a section titled "Conclusion" (pp. 259–290), it functions as a chronological continuation of the preceding sections in the chapter, detailing the final phase of the efforts to establish a unified Laos after World War II. The lack of a general conclusion may reflect the book's engagement with two interconnected yet not fully integrated subjects. Undoubtedly, the Franco–Thai War had profound impact on Laos's transformation

into a unified state under the King of Luang Prabang. Still, the book-length revisionist perspective presented in the first section and the discussion of the ambiguous legal status and subsequent unification in the second section do not cohere into an overarching argument; thus the volume appears to present two distinct cases. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the value of each section, both of which shed new light on the topics discussed. Featuring on its cover a portrait of long-reigning King Sisavang Vong—who was King of Luang Prabang from 1904 to 1945 and later became the first king of a united Laos from 1946 to 1959—the book is likely to attract readers interested in Laos's history. Gojosso's examination of the kingdom's uncertain legal status prior to its 1946 unification offers these readers valuable insights.

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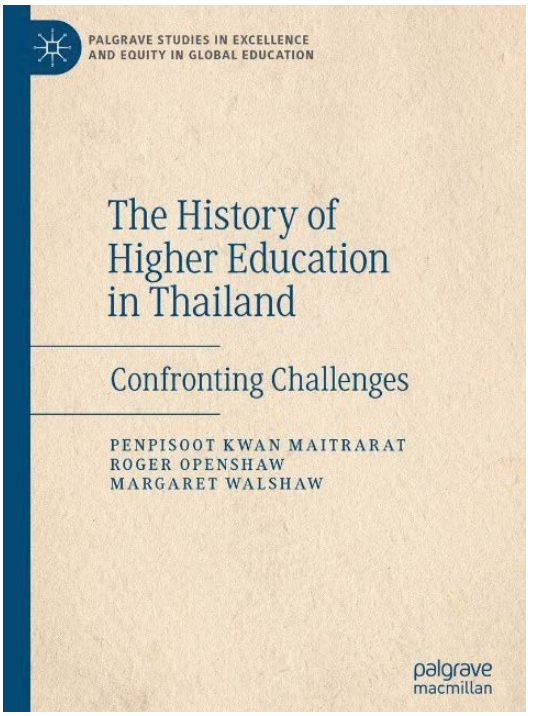
Penpisoot Kwan Maitrarat, Roger Openshaw & Margaret Walshaw, eds, *The History of Higher Education in Thailand: Confronting Challenges*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 217 pages, €119.99, ISBN 978–3030790783 (Paperback)



The history of higher education in Thailand is of personal interest to me. From 1969 until the mid-1970s I was an invited special lecturer in Thai and Southeast Asian history and English at the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University and the History Department of Prasarnmit College of Education in Bangkok. At both of these institutions and at Silpakorn University, from the mid-1970s onwards, I was also regularly invited to supervise master's theses in history. From the mid-2000s until quite recently, I served on the Council of the University of Khon Kaen.

It is good and useful to be reminded of the history of Thai institutions of higher education through this edited volume. The authors date "the establishment of the first university, Chulalongkorn, in 1916" (p. 10). They could have delved more deeply and acknowledged that Thai higher education might have started with professional vocational training when the School for the Cultivation of Artisans (Pho Chang; เพาะช่าง) was founded in 1912. Chulalongkorn University itself was based on the earlier School for the Civil Service and did not provide the foundations for the engineering profession (p. 31) as its Faculty of Engineering has always claimed that it is older. Nor did Chulalongkorn University provide the foundations for the medical professions. The University's Faculty of Medicine was founded by the Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital of the Thai Red Cross Society in the late 1940s and built on Thai Red Cross grounds to provide a teaching hospital of training doctors for its hospital instead of recruiting them from Siriraj Hospital. The arrangement has worked well for both sides to this day.

The change of administration from Absolute Monarchy to Constitutional Monarchy in 1932 resulted in the creation of four new universities: (1) the University of Moral and Political Sciences (today Thammasat University) in 1933, (2) the University of Medical Sciences (today Mahidol University) in 1942, and (3) the University of Agricultural Sciences (today Kasetsart University) and (4) the University of Fine Arts (today Silpakorn University) both in 1943 (pp. 37–38). As with Chulalongkorn, the authors should have provided information that these new universities were based on existing schools of higher learning, e.g., Tham-

masat on the School of Law and Mahidol on Siriraj Hospital and its medical school. In any case, these institutions were created as part of the "Six Principles" of the People's Party to "provide public education for all citizens" (p. 34).

For instance, Thammasat University of Moral and Political Sciences's

> [...] key focus was on the development of knowledge and understanding of political affairs and administration responsive to the nation's newly formed democratic regime. [...] When it first opened, it was as an institution independent from state control and remained so for nearly twenty years. It adopted an open system of admissions without compulsory class attendance, a system which later, in 1960, it was required to change (p. 37).

The University also dropped Political Sciences, or politics (*kan mueang*; การเมือง) from its name. Its political vicissitudes paralleled political developments in Siam, later Thailand. Rather than focusing on the political, it became a full-fledged university when it expanded to its new campus in Rangsit to the north of Bangkok away from the iconic site adjacent to the Grand Palace. This expansion incorporated a Faculty of Medicine and teaching hospital and a Faculty of Engineering. This new campus was the vision of one of one of its great former presidents, Dr Puey Ungpakorn (1916–1999), who does not feature in the index.

As Thammasat became a full-fledged university, so did the other specialized universities from that earlier period. The University of Medical Sciences (Mahidol University) prefers to date itself to the founding of Siriraj Hospital and its medical teaching school in the 1880s rather than to 1942. It acquired a huge campus in Salaya to the west of Bangkok and became a full-fledged university with a Faculty of Music whose orchestra performs in a concert cum-general assembly hall, famed for some of the best acoustics in the world. The University of Agricultural Sciences (Kasetsart University) likewise has become a full-fledged university with a Faculty of Education well known for its innovative approaches. It will soon have a medical faculty and a teaching hospital while not forsaking its original vocation in its justly famous agricultural faculties.

Even the University of Fine Arts (Silpakorn University) has become a full-fledged university with its main campus now in the beautiful grounds of King Rama VI's Sanam Chan Palace in Nakhon Pathom. Only the original Faculties of Archeology and of Architecture remain at its original site of Tha Phra Palace opposite the Grand Palace in Bangkok.

The point is that the specialized universities inspired by the Revolution of 1932 have all become full-fledged universities in order to expand higher education and meet national needs. This process took some time.

The authors are correct in dating the end of the 1932 revolutionary period to 1947 (p. 44). The coup that year was not led by Field Marshal Sarit Tanarat but by Field Marshal Phin Choonhavan. But

the authors are correct in tracing "The Beginning of American Domination" to this period (pp. 45ff). According to the authors, the United States established "the Higher Teacher Training School at Prasanmit, [which] later became a College of Education and is now known as Srinakharinwirot Prasanmit" (p. 46). No dates are provided. The College of Education at Prasarnmit was the brainchild of ML Pin Malakul in the early 1960s as a superior training school for elite teachers of the Ministry of Education. Pin Malakul was not a politician, as described on page 66, but a distinguished educationist, whose career spanned the entire reign of Rama IX (1946–2016). In any case, the authors are correct in noting that "The establishment of a higher teacher training school at Prasanmit took the total number of higher education institutions in Thailand to six" (p. 46). The College of Education at Prasarnmit became a full-fledged university under the name of Srinakharinwirot University in 1974 (p. 72) and later opened another campus in Ongkharak district in Nakhon Nayok province, where it has a Faculty of Medicine and a teaching hospital. Additionally, Prasarnmit created several branches in the provinces, which later became full-fledged universities, including that of Mahasarakham, the university of Penpisoot Kwan Maitrarat, a co-author of this volume. The Thai government's First Development Plan (1961–1966) brought the next wave of universities which, at last, took higher education to the provinces. "Three regional universities, Chiang Mai in the North, Khon Kaen in the Northeast, and Prince of Songkla in the South were established between 1964 and 1967" (p. 61).

The Second National Economic and Social Development Plan (1967–1971) opened higher education to privatization. The authors do not provide much information about private institutions of higher education, except a brief mention of Bangkok University's current president, Petch Osathanugrah (p. 192). Similarly, the views of Rangsit University's president, Arthit Urairat, could have been sought as he managed, against all odds, to establish the first Faculty of Medicine in a private university.

The authors seem more interested in state institutions of higher education, which is understandable since there is more information publicly available about them. The Third National Economic and Social Development Plan (1972–1976) heralded an "Unprecedented Expansion of Higher Education" (pp. 71ff). There was a revival of specialized universities in the fields of sciences and technologies in the form of the multi-sited King Mongkut's Institutes of Technology (KMIT), the advent of the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), and the return of open universities with the establishment of Ramkamhaeng University in 1971 and Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University in 1978, which became the first university in Southeast Asia to offer distance learning.

The authors mentioned in the same breath the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT). But AIT had been established earlier by the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) as a component of its development program to upgrade science and engineering skills in Asia

as its contribution to the containment of Asian communism. Since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, all Asians have been welcome to AIT; I write as a former Chairman of its Board. During this period, Maejo Institute of Agricultural Technology in Chiang Mai was upgraded to a university.

The First and Second Long Range Plans on Higher Education 1990–2004 and 2008–2022 bring us to the present. This period commenced with the founding of the first autonomous university in 1990, Suranaree University of Technology located in Nakhon Ratchasima, the gateway to northeast Thailand. This was the first university "to receive financial support from the government in the form of block grants. It embraced the devolution of authority by establishing its own council with full decision-making powers relating to staff, curricula, and salaries" (p. 100). This innovation became the model which most universities followed in the following two decades. In the first decade of the 21st century, teachers and agricultural training colleges were upgraded to universities (*mahawitthayalai*; มหาวิทยาลัย), with the titles of Rajaphat (ราชภัฏ) and Rajamongkhol (ราชมงคล) preceding their locations, respectively. This answered demands from the teaching profession as well as local politicians to which the government readily acceded for short-term political ends. Nevertheless, it finally brought higher education within reach of all.

The subtitle of this book is "Confronting Challenges". With universal higher education, the dilemma worldwide is always quantity versus quality. In 2009, the Thai government addressed this challenge by designating nine universities as "national research universities, namely Chiang Mai University, Chulalongkorn University, Kasetsart University, King Mongkut University of Technology Thonburi, Khon Kaen University, Mahidol University, Prince of Songkla University, Suranaree University of Technology, and Thammasat University" (p. 95). The criteria for their selection is unfortunately not given. Quantity, however, does not necessarily mean lack of quality. Ramkamhaeng University's graduates have become governors, permanent secretaries, distinguished academics, and lawyers.

The problems of contemporary Thai higher education are the same as those of the rest of the world. They concern such matters as over-supply, administrative inefficiency, interminable so-called performance-based assessments, commercialization, and obsession with ratings. These problems are well addressed in the last chapters of the book, which are analytical and critical, with excellent facts and figures. The right people were interviewed. One of them said, "it was unnecessary to upgrade all Teachers Colleges and [...] Institutes of Technology as universities". Another said, "it was not necessary for [m]any colleges which specialize in specific areas [...] to be elevated as universities" (p. 120). On the rating system, one interviewee said, "[r]anking is a measure that advantages only those who designed the 'standards' and the assessment process. It is quite useless in Thailand [...]" (p. 139). Well said; administrative inefficiency, over-supply,

and duplication are rectified by amalgamation and downsizing right now.

It has taken over a hundred years for Thai higher education to become universal. In terms of quality, the master's theses I have supervised over the years meet international standards. In terms of governance, at least at Khon Kaen University, the "Lay Board", on which I served for over a decade, meets all the criteria on the wish-list of the authors (p. 191). The external members include graduates and local private sector representatives as well as national personalities from both the public and private sectors, whose selection was transparent and approved by the academic community. It was an honor to have served on their council. Despite the authors' valid criticisms, Thai higher education has matured and reached a critical mass, in which it can initiate social science, medical, and pure scientific research, as well as its own further development for the future benefit of the nation.

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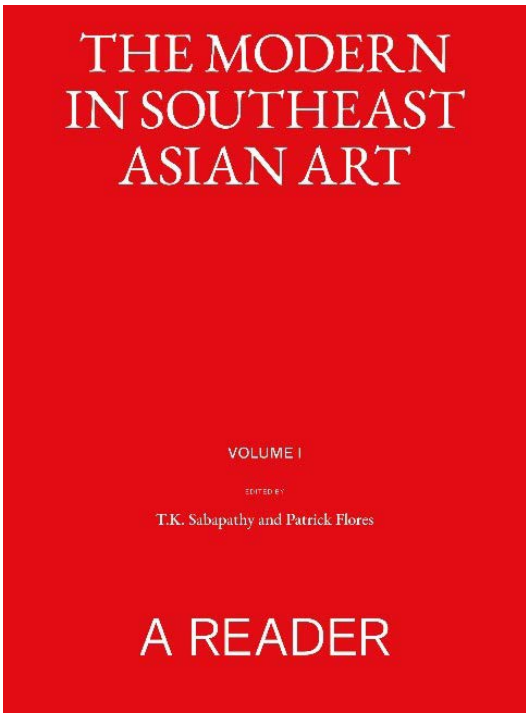
T.K. Sabapathy & Patrick D. Flores, eds, *The Modern in Southeast Asian Art: A Reader*, Singapore: National Gallery Singapore, 2023, Two Volumes, 1326 pages, SGD$129, ISBN 978–9811406645 (Paperback)



The Modern in Southeast Asian Art: A Reader is a landmark two-volume anthology comprising nearly 300 primary texts—many newly translated into English; its aim is to foreground the intellectual and artistic discourses that shaped modernism in Southeast Asia from the late 19th to late 20th century. This ambitious seven-year collaborative project, supported by the National Gallery Singapore (NGS) and Nanyang Technological University's Centre of Contemporary Art Singapore (NTU CCA), represents the first comprehensive collection of texts on modern art in Southeast Asia. An idea initially sparked by the lead editor T.K. Sabapathy in 2015, it eventuated into a "Reader" on modern art, spanning the inaccessible and unknown to the familiar and oft-cited—a "first such Reader with this reach and compass" (Sabapathy & Scott, vol. 1, p. 1). Meticulously co-edited by Phoebe Scott and Julie Ewington, this mammoth project further involved ten of the region's

scholars and researchers as contributing editors.[1]

The publication challenges the epistemological function of the Reader as a stabilizing device. It does not claim to offer a definitive version of Southeast Asia's modernity, but instead opens space for debate, contradiction, and incompleteness. This is especially significant in the context of global art history, where the notion of modernism has been primarily defined by Western genealogies and institutional frameworks. By assembling a translocal archive that is purposefully heterogeneous, *The Modern in Southeast Asian Art* positions itself not as a self-contained reference work, but as an invitation to further research, reinterpretation, and methodological pluralism.

The organizational structure reflects this complexity. The first volume traces the emergence of modern artistic consciousness through three chapters spanning the late 19th century to the 1960s, documenting how artists and critics across the region grappled with colonial encounters, the formation of new nations, and competing visions of cultural modernity. The second volume examines the period from the 1970s through the 1990s, when artists and institutions navigated Cold War ideological pressures while simultaneously engaging with accelerating globalization and the international art world. Yet the thematic organization reveals how issues central to modernism—questions of tradition versus innovation, national identity versus cosmopolitanism, and the role of art in society—resurface across different temporal moments and geographical contexts, reinforcing the volume's resistance to teleological narratives of artistic developments.

In academic contexts, a Reader typically functions as a curated compilation of foundational or representative texts designed to introduce a field, consolidate knowledge, or establish a discursive canon. It is pedagogical in nature—often positioned as a tool for teaching, stabilizing a subject area, and framing its key debates. It implies authority in its very act of consolidating key texts worthy for consideration. *The Modern in Southeast Asian Art*, while adopting this familiar format, subtly disrupts the expectations the term carries. Rather than presenting a coherent or linear account of Southeast Asian modernism, the volume foregrounds multiplicity: that is, texts that are originally written in over a dozen languages (and many translated into English for the first time), are drawn from diverse national, linguistic, and political contexts, and often reflect divergent understandings of "the modern". And so, reviewing *The Modern in Southeast Asian Art* is especially complex because the volume is caught in a productive tension: it gestures toward a more inclusive, decolonial account of modern art in Southeast Asia, yet it can never be truly comprehensive. Even with nearly 300 texts, it can only ever offer a partial view of the region's diverse artistic discourses. This incompleteness is not a flaw, but a structural condition of the project. Southeast Asia is not a unified cultural

[1] The contributing editors include Antariksa, Gridthiya Gaweewong, Horikawa Lisa, Yin Ker, Manuporn Luengaram, Roger Nelson, Roberto Paulino, Seng Yu Jin, Aminudin T.H. Siregar, and Simon Soon.

field; it is a region marked by uneven colonial histories, divergent modernities, and contested geopolitical boundaries. Any attempt to represent "the modern" across this terrain must navigate asymmetries in archival access, translation, documentation, and institutional visibility. In this light, the Reader's fragmentary and heterogeneous structure becomes an implicit argument against the notion of a totalizing narrative.

The temporal scope of the collection—as early as 1843 to the 1990s—is marked by moments of "the historicization and critical self-awareness of the modern" as noted Sabapathy & Scott in their jointly penned introduction (vol. 1, p. 2) and thus not intended to be prescriptive or deterministic. The periods in this compilation, as co-editor Patrick Flores had cautioned, "are best grasped as plastic rather than iron-clad" (vol. 1, pp. 7–10). Among the earliest texts is a much overlooked vernacular account, "The Hikayat Abdullah" (first published in 1843), originally written in Malay, which provides a fascinating early encounter with the daguerreotype (vol. 1, p. 142)—and a reminder that new technologies are central in the development of all visual modernities. Exhibition-making as another hallmark of modern art production was already signaled in Raden Ajeng Kartini's 1903 letter, as she reimagines a new world that makes room for the arts of Jepara, her hometown in Indonesia (vol. 1, p. 117).

The texts from the 1980s and 1990s mark a distinct shift toward theoretical self-consciousness, where Southeast Asian writers moved beyond defending regional art practices to fundamentally re-examining the modern itself. This period captures what Flores again describes as the "re-encounter" with the modern "in the face of a renewed conception of tradition" (vol. 2, p. 1206)—a process that exposed the inadequacies of modernist frameworks while charting new approaches to the contemporary. Jim Supangkat's "Contemporary Art: What/When/Where" (first published in 1996) offers "multimodernism" as a concept that dismantles the modern's claims to universality, revealing instead its Western specificity and colonial logic (vol. 2, p. 1257). His argument—that Third World contemporary art required initially understanding different modernist developments—effectively challenged the linear progression from modern to contemporary that dominated Western art history. Similarly, Flores's "Towards a Southeast Asian Perspective in Art History and Regional Aesthetics" (first published in 1995) demanded methodological frameworks capable of moving beyond the modern's "cult of genius and patron/investor" (vol. 2, p. 1210), advocating for approaches that could accommodate the hybrid and contradictory formations that modernist categories failed to grasp. Taking stock of the contemporary moment, Apinan Poshyananda's essay "The Future: Post-Cold War, Postmodernism, Post-marginalia" (first published in 1993) warns against sanitized cultural diplomacy, demanding instead an art discourse capable of acknowledging "conflicts and collisions" (vol. 2, p. 1268). His critique reveals how contemporary global circuits could reproduce modernist hierarchies under new guises. By bookending *The Modern in South-*

east Asian Art, these texts demonstrate how the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a shift from nationalist or essentialist frameworks toward more nuanced, theoretically informed analysis that could engage critically with Western art historical methodologies while asserting regional specificity.

In particular, these volumes are to be commended for foregrounding gender in relation to art and modernity, although this gesture has also ironically underscored how deeply women have been structurally marginalized in Southeast Asian art history. The anthology includes several texts that expose women's absence from the artistic field. For instance, Dolores D. Wharton's 1971 survey of Malaysian artists reveals how few women participated in the art scene (vol. 1, p. 622) and Adi Mas's 1959 interview with Hong Kong artist Hui Han Cheng, who expressed hope that "female painters will emerge from your homeland" when discussing the Malayan art scene. These moments of cross-cultural gender solidarity, observes contributing editor Simon Soon, highlight how women's exclusion was recognized as a regional concern (vol. 1, p. 434). Anna Gunaratnam's 1954 technical essay "Experiment in Sculpture" stands as a notable exception in an ocean of male-dominated voices, demonstrating women's expertise while also revealing how sculpture was characterized as "the most exacting and the most arduous of the arts", perhaps reflecting additional barriers women faced in accessing challenging artistic media (vol. 1, p. 410). When women do appear as authoritative voices, their contributions are often remarkable for their analytical rigor and cultural sensitivity. For example, Hurustiati Subandrio, trained in anthropology, highlighted Indonesia's struggles in her introduction of Indonesian modern art to a primarily British audience at the height of national Independence in 1948 (vol. 1, p. 590), whilst diplomat and educator Alice M.L. Coseteng's sharp observations in 1971 serve as a tacit reminder of the role of art critics in the growth of Philippine modern art (vol. 1, p. 639).

The gender dimensions of this anthology raise important methodological questions for art historical recovery projects. The editors' success in locating figures like Nena Saguil—whose 1968 interview from Paris provides rare insight into women's experiences of artistic exile (vol. 1, p. 560)—demonstrates that women's voices exist in the archive, but often in scattered, marginalized locations. If future scholarship is to recover women's contributions and reshape Southeast Asian art history, it must take seriously sources beyond the conventional archive—an approach already reflected in the editors' inclusion of lifestyle magazines, public announcements, interviews, letters, manifestos, and memoirs alongside traditional academic writing and art criticism. This heterogeneous approach captures the modern and contemporary in art practice and critical discourse. Thus, the anthology becomes not only a record of artistic discourse, but also an inadvertent documentation of systematic exclusion—a reminder that modernism's promises of liberation are unevenly distributed across gender lines, even as they are

articulated by some of the region's most progressive cultural voices.

In many ways, this collection echoes the ambition of volumes such as *Contemporary Chinese Art: Primary Documents* (MoMA, 2010), yet diverges in scope and method. Whereas the latter centers primarily on post-socialist China and curatorial frameworks, *The Modern in Southeast Asian Art* adopts a regionally expansive, multilingual, and diachronic approach, recovering diverse and often overlooked voices from multiple national contexts. It destabilizes dominant genealogies of modernism by emphasizing regional specificity, multilingual production, and intra-Asian circulations. Despite its critical stance, the volume inevitably participates in the construction of canon. By selecting and translating particular texts, it authorizes certain voices, moments, and modes of writing as representative or noteworthy. The act of anthologizing may also become its foil, for in the binding of disparate materials into a Reader it risks stabilizing what was once contingent, marginal, or oppositional. In this sense, *The Modern in Southeast Asian Art* reproduces the paradox that haunts all canon-building efforts: it seeks to challenge dominant art historical narratives while also becoming a foundational reference point for future scholarship.

What emerges, then, is a generative ambivalence. The Reader acknowledges its limits and foregrounds the provisionality of its selections, but it cannot escape the institutional role it plays in shaping the discourse. Thus, as the subtitle notes, "*A Reader*" becomes both functional and ironic: it marks the book as a tool for study while drawing attention to the limits of what such a tool can do. Rather than reinforcing existing paradigms, it challenges readers to rethink the structure and boundaries of knowledge itself—especially in relation to the complexity of Southeast Asian modern art histories. For students and scholars, this tension is both a challenge and an opportunity: to read the volume not as a closed archive, but as an invitation to seek what is missing, to question the terms of inclusion, and to imagine new forms of knowledge production beyond the anthology's frame. This two-volume compendium is undoubtedly an invaluable resource for anyone committed to the study of modern Southeast Asian art.

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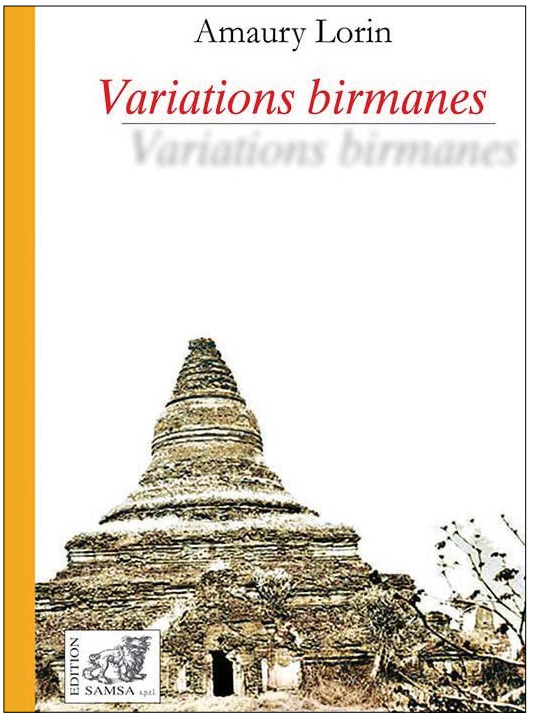
Amaury Lorin, *Variations birmanes*, Bruxelles: Éditions SAMSA, 2022, 200 pages, €20, ISBN 978–2875934147 (Paperback)



As a native speaker of Burmese (the language of Myanmar, formerly known as Burma), I read *Variations birmanes* with great interest and appreciation. Though the country is officially known as Myanmar, many still use the name "Burma" in English—a likely anglicization of the colloquial Burmese pronunciation /bə.ma$_2$ (ဗမာ)/, a variant of the country's name in its own language.

Born and raised in Myanmar but living abroad for the past four decades, I found *Variations birmanes* a thoroughly engaging read. It is clear that the book is neither a textbook nor an academic study aimed at experts on Myanmar. Rather, it is a travelogue that blends personal observation with historical reflection, based on the author's journeys through Myanmar between 2013 and 2015—a brief period during which the country became more accessible to foreign visitors after decades of isolation following its independence in the late 1940s.

The book is best described as a hybrid work: part travel writing, part historical inquiry, and part commentary on some of the pressing and controversial issues affecting Myanmar today. Much of the historical material is based on thorough archival research, especially at the British Library in London. The result is a volume that is both informative and accessible.

I would warmly recommend *Variations birmanes* to anyone curious about Myanmar—particularly those unfamiliar with the country. True to its title, the book offers a series of "variations" on different aspects of Burmese life, culture, and geography, ranging from religion (Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam) to lesser-known regions such as MacLeod Island in the south or Katha in the north (notably associated with George Orwell's service in colonial Burma).

Reading the book, I even discovered things I had not known about my own country. For instance, I learned that a form of Sanskrit once served as a kind of *lingua franca* in ancient Myanmar (p. 129), that British actor Ralph Fiennes (b. 1962) is an admirer of George Orwell (1903–1950), and that jade was once valued as highly as gold in Chinese culture. Lorin also notes the significant Chinese diaspora in Myanmar—a reality shared by many Asian countries.

To his credit, the author remains modest throughout. He makes it clear

that his observations are personal and does not claim to represent a definitive or exhaustive account of Myanmar. He acknowledges the complexity of the country, including the many religious places that mark its landscape (p. 140), and even touches upon historical figures such as Marco Polo, who, he notes, never actually reached Myanmar (Chapter 11, p. 144).

His remark that "a visitor is not encouraged to stay at a Burmese's home instead of going to a hotel" rings true. I can confirm that, some 40 years ago, it was strictly prohibited for Burmese citizens to host foreign guests in their homes—a reminder of the persistent slowness of change in Myanmar.

The book is organized into fourteen chapters, each prefaced by a photograph—many taken by the author himself. These images serve as evocative entry points into the themes of each chapter. Chapter 1 ("Le pivot birman") introduces Myanmar's complex identity; Chapter 2 ("La pagode d'or") focuses on the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon; and Chapter 3 ("Au nom de Dieu") explores the role of religion. Chapter 4 ("Le sang et l'esprit") and Chapter 5 ("Le tombeau impérial") discuss, respectively, cultural memory and the visits of foreign dignitaries. The historical insights offered here reflect the author's training as a historian. Chapter 6 ("Passage vers Éden") turns to the southern region of Mergui (Myeik/Beik), while Chapter 7 ("Le fantôme de Katha") returns to the colonial north, where Orwell served. Chapter 8 ("L'empire des collines") covers colonial-era towns near Mandalay —once the royal capital and often hit by earthquakes. Chapter 9 ("La Birmanie française ?") discusses the little-known French presence in the country. Chapter 10 ("La cité interdite de Rangoun") recounts key places visited in Yangon, the former capital, also known as Rangoon/Rangoun, while Chapter 11 ("En remontant la Chindwin") traces a journey along the Chindwin River. Chapter 12 ("La dernière vallée") focuses on Kachin State and environmental degradation caused by mining—an especially timely topic. Chapter 13 ("L'éclat des rubis") is devoted to Mogok, Myanmar's famed source of rubies. The final chapter, "En Arakan, les Rohingya", addresses one of the most controversial topics in recent Burmese history: the plight of the Rohingya Muslim minority.

The book's structure is coherent and its thematic range wide without feeling scattered. If there is one limitation, it is perhaps the fact that the book is written in French. This undoubtedly limits its readership, especially outside the Francophone world. That said, the author has published English-language pieces in *The Myanmar Times* and is clearly attuned to a broader audience. In addition, *Variations birmanes* contains many references to the French presence in Myanmar, both past and present. This includes figures such as Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929), who, in 1920, met Maurice Collis (1889–1973)—the latter a colonial magistrate and prolific writer whose works, such as *Trials in Burma* (1938), remain essential reading for understanding colonial tensions in early 20th-century Rangoon.

The book is elegantly written and was deservedly selected for the Prix Pierre Loti 2023. Lorin's academic background in history and political

science is evident throughout. What I found most impressive was his ability to balance personal experience with serious historical research, drawing from a range of archives, including the British Library—an appropriate source, given the legacy of British colonialism in Myanmar. In sum, *Variations birmanes* is a welcome and compelling addition to the growing body of travel writing on contemporary Myanmar. It offers valuable insights from a Western traveler with a historian's eye and a thoughtful, respectful tone. One hopes this is not the last of such contributions from Amaury Lorin.

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