

Reviews

Northeast Thailand – from Prehistoric to Modern Times

Peter Rogers.

DK Books, Bangkok. 1996, Baht 395.

This work is a logical and more penetrating examination of the northeast of Thailand than the author's first book, *A Window on Isan* (1989). Isan, as the territory is known to Thais, constitutes one third of the land mass of today's Thailand and contributes one third of the population. It cannot therefore be ignored in an overall picture of Thailand. But since it was never a state, kingdom or possessed a culture in its own right it is not a country about which a conventional history can be written.

The discovery of pottery in Ban Chiang, near Udon Thani, as recently as the 1970s does give rise to some speculation that the north of Isan may, some 6,000 years ago, have been part of an ancient civilisation. The reality of Isan is that it has always been, until very recent years, a barren tract of land with little soil, few natural resources and a weather system not conducive to intensive cultivation until more modern irrigation works commenced. Isan was sparsely populated and was thus hardly attractive as a source of slaves to its neighbours.

What previous accounts do exist of Isan are therefore fragmentary references within the histories of neighbouring civilisations. The author has sifted through all this mass of data and recorded the various cultures which have passed through Isan over the centuries. More importantly these include the Khmer from the south; the people of Sukhothai heading east, Ayutthaya expanding east and south to complete the downfall of the Khmers. Finally the Ratanakosin regime under the Chakri kings gave Isan a form of unified government for the first time.

All the earlier cultures passing through Isan left some traces of their own civilisation and religions. Their ruins have been carefully noted, and the account and conclusions are very much the author's own, with a few enlightening direct quotations. Thus, the book is far from being just a secondary source of compilation. But even the most minute references to sources have been meticulously recorded.

The narrative flows easily without the pseudo-technical expressions nowadays so common. If the author is a trifle pedantic or avuncular this can be ascribed to his own long research into the background and his obvious enthusiasm for Isan which he has visited so often. His English is of high standard and this in itself is a bonus for the reader whether foreign or Thai.

The maps are adequate but lack interrelation with one another. The generous colour photographs do a lot to enhance this work. All in all it is easy reading and gives a very full account of Isan and its absorption into today's Thailand. At its price this is a good buy for the casual reader or as a compact reference for the more academically minded.

Ian N. Morson, Bangkok
January 1997

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Three recent books on aspects of Khmer life, culture and society are reviewed here together.

The Khmers

Ian Mabbett and David Chandler
Oxford, UK & Cambridge Massachusetts, USA, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1995 cloth; reprinted 1996; 1996 paperback; Chiang Mai, Thailand, Silkworm Books, 1996 (paperback)

Angkor Life

Stephen O. Murray
San Francisco, California, USA, Bua Luang
Books, 1996

Reporting Angkor: Chou Ta-Kuan in Cambodia, 1296-1297

Robert Philpotts
London, Blackwater Books, 1996

The publication of three books on the Khmer people within a year is surprising, as, previously, little had been written on this aspect of the great civilization that emanated from Angkor in northwest Cambodia. The three books are not equal in scope or content but they are examined together in this review because of their common subject.

The Khmers, written by Ian Mabbett and David Chandler, is the third book in a series, 'The Peoples of South-East Asia and The Pacific', edited by Peter Bellwood and Ian Glover, two academic archaeologists. The series aims to present scholarly material written by authorities in a style that is accessible to a general readership. Mabbett and Chandler are both authors of previous books on Asian culture and are associated with the History Department at Monash University, Australia.

The seventeen chapters in *The Khmers* cover a period extending from prehistory to the late twentieth century. Mabbett wrote the first fifteen chapters and Chandler wrote the last two. Chapters 1 through 8 and 16 and 17 are arranged chronologically, whereas the seven chapters in between are organized thematically. There are eight maps and forty-seven black-and-white photographs, and supporting material includes lists of Plates and Maps; a Preface; two Appendices (Chronology of Angkor's Rulers and The Periodization of Religious Art and Architecture); a combined Bibliography and Guide to Further Reading; and an Index.

The inclusion of both traditional and recent theories on Khmer history gives this book a significant and unique place in the field of published works on Angkor, as

previous books have mainly expressed the research and opinions of either one person or a single nationality. The text incorporates information resulting from the use of new methodology such as space and radar imaging techniques, and it also draws on recent research carried out by international experts working on the conservation and preservation of Angkor since its inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage List in November 1992.

A fine example of the incorporation of new research in this book is in the area of the prehistory of Southeast Asia where some major changes have taken place recently. Chapter four, 'Before History Began', presents the current thinking on this complex subject in a highly readable manner. We learn that for the first time it is possible to reconstruct a chronological evolution and various possibilities for the migration pattern of the development of agriculture in Southeast Asia. Evidence from early sites in areas such as western Cambodia and the Khorat plateau in Thailand confirms that rice-based agriculture developed in the third millennium BC in Southeast Asia and that the technologies of copper, bronze, iron, and pottery followed.

The next chapter takes up another perplexing topic; the growth of the social organization and the rise of cities in Cambodia and northeast Thailand. The authors believe that around the fourth century BC economic advances brought about a change in the pattern of social organization. Substantially large and presumably centralized settlements with the basic elements of a social hierarchy rose and these were the predecessors to the so-called 'states' in Cambodia. These fairly sophisticated settlements were firmly established long before any influence from India appeared in Cambodia. Mabbett and Chandler acknowledge that some elements of Indian social organization were adapted in Cambodia but they minimize its impact and emphasize that the degree of influence should be assessed with extreme caution due to scanty evidence.

The earliest recorded Khmer history,

from the late sixth century to the end of the eighth, is covered in chapters 6 and 7, and, as previously, the inclusion of current ideas increases the reader's understanding of this controversial subject and sheds lights on a hazy period. The traditional theory supports the idea that the predecessors of the Angkor period were the states of Funan and Chenla (Zhenla) but this theory is strongly challenged today by modern scholars who argue against not only the existence of states by these names but also the location of them. A major objection is that the traditional theory relies solely on Chinese sources constructed from a Chinese perspective.

Although the structure of the social organization in Cambodia preceding the ninth century is debated, historians generally accept that Jayavarman II unified the existing principalities in AD 802, declared himself king, and initiated a religious cult, *kamraten jagat ta raja* (Khmer) or *devaraja* (Sanskrit). Chapter 8 looks at the meaning and significance of this cult through the views of scholars such as Claude Jacques and Herman Kulke.

Reading the book, it seems surprising that so little attention is given to Hinduism and Buddhism since religion was an indivisible and integral part of the economy and the art. The worship of spirits by the Khmer people and the integration of these pre-Angkor beliefs with the formalized religions are discussed in chapter nine, 'The Immortals'. However, Hinduism, the dominant religion at Angkor for nearly 400 years, and Mahayana Buddhism, which prevailed in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, receive minimal mention, whereas the other branch of Buddhism, Theravada, which was not fully adopted in Cambodia until the post-Angkor period, is described in considerable detail.

The widely discussed topic of whether or not the Khmers built and maintained a centralized, large-scale irrigation system connected with moats, canals, and dikes to form a network, and the purpose, function, and importance of the vast *barays* (reservoirs), is examined in chapter 11. It contains

the most complete and up-to-date information available on the subject of irrigation at Angkor.

Chapter 14 looks at the architecture and the iconography of the temples at Angkor. Although an attempt is made to show the development of Khmer architecture, it is confusing because the monuments are presented randomly, jumping from late to early, from complex to simple. The reader is deprived of the ordered expansion of Khmer architecture which progresses from a single brick tower to an entire complex of interconnected, stone structures. Subjective views on the beauty of the temples are seemingly included in an effort to appeal to a wider readership but this type of writing is more suited to a guide book.

The main thread of the iconography in Khmer art is lost in an effort to be concise. Mythical animal figures are mentioned out of context and there are no illustrations to enhance the descriptions. It is difficult to visualize the *kala* as 'a bodiless monster with a face that seems to vomit serpent bodies', when, in fact, the figure has several distinguishing characteristics such as claw-like hands, bulbous eyes, a human or a lion's nose, and two horns, that could have been mentioned to help the reader form an image of the *kala*. The inclusion of legends such as how the *kala* lost its body, the naga, the Churning of the Ocean of Milk, and the role of Mount Meru in mythology would help the reader conjure up images of these figures.

Four Hindu gods are identified but no explanation of their chronological sequence or popularity in Cambodia is given, which leaves the reader wondering how they fit in to the context of Khmer religion and art. The human form of Siva is described, for example, but it is not mentioned, at least in this chapter, that Siva's earliest form of worship in Cambodia was a symbolical one, that of a *linga*, or phallic emblem. Siva and Visnu were major gods and while they both survived from pre-Angkor times, each one maintained a period of popular dominance. Also, the authors seem to have consulted

only sources concerned with the gods in India and ignored references on Khmer iconography. A lotus, for example, is one of Visnu's attributes in Indian iconography but in Cambodia it was replaced by a ball representing the earth. One would also like to read something about the magnificent Khmer stone sculpture that survives today.

The 'past' history of Cambodia concludes in chapter 15 with a review of the achievements of the last major king, Jayavarman VII (reg. 1181-c.1218) and the decline of Angkor, which finally ceased to function as the centre of the Khmer civilization in the mid-fifteenth century. Modern scholars generally accept that Angkor was not sacked by the Thais in a decisive battle of 1430-31 as previously believed, but rather that it was weakened through repeated invasions by the Thais. Sometime around 1431, the Khmers began a gradual exodus to the south-east where they established a new capital in the area of Phnom Penh. A summary of theories by leading scholars on the causes for the shift of Angkor to the middle Mekong concludes the chapter.

David Chandler's text covers the post-Angkorian period, from after the decline of Angkor until 1994. This long period is recapped in two succinctly written chapters beginning, in chapter 16, with the impact of the shift of the capital from Angkor to Phnom Penh and the role of foreign traders and missionaries in Cambodia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Then, the Vietnamese expansion southward in to the Mekong delta and the one hundred years that Cambodia was overwhelmed by internal struggles and invasions from Vietnam and Thailand are considered.

The period of French colonialism beginning in 1863 when Cambodia was peaceful, both internally and with neighbouring countries, and had a stable economic environment is reviewed. The immense contribution by the French to our understanding of the culture of Cambodia when they became the first foreigners to survey and catalogue the ruins of Angkor and decipher hundreds of inscriptions is covered. The chapter ends

with a discussion of the growth of nationalism in the 1930s which turned the Cambodian thinking towards independence.

The text places the year 1945 as the chronological marker for the beginning of the post-war period when Cambodian history entered the international sphere. Chapter 17 examines the French dominance of Cambodia following the Second World War and the country's struggle for independence during the so-called Sihanouk era, from 1955 to 1970, when Cambodia was politically and economically reasonably stable. Concise summaries are given of the eras of Lon Nol, the American backed leader (1970-75), of Saloth Sar (Pol Pot) and Democratic Kampuchea (1975-78), and of the invasion of Vietnam at the end of 1978 until its withdrawal in 1989.

The last part of chapter 17 covers the period from after the departure of the Vietnamese when Cambodia opened up to the international world up to 1994. The negotiations in 1989-90 involving the varying factions in Cambodia are explained. The Paris Peace Accords of October 1991 installed a United Nations-backed administrative power in Phnom Penh to oversee a 'free and fair' election and to compile a constitution. Both these measures were completed by the end of 1993 and the United Nations withdrew. The authors conclude that maybe the deeply ingrained links with Cambodia's past history and culture may not be enough for sustained protection as Cambodia struggles to survive as an independent twentieth-century state.

The illustrations – the selection, the placement within the text, and the poor reproduction – detract from the quality of the text. The inclusion of photographs such as a modern Cambodian bride, young women selling birds, and rice vendors in Phnom Penh are not relevant to the text. Additionally, the captions are inadequate. Some temples are identified, others are not. Plate 15 is almost certainly a photograph of the Buddha sheltered by the naga from Preah Khan in Kompong Svay that is now in the Musée Guimet in Paris, although no credit is given.

A few editorial errors also occur in the text: 'Angkor was definitely not abandoned' in chapter 15 is followed by a reference to 'the abandonment of Angkor', in chapter sixteen – an inconsistency between the two authors that should have been picked up by the editors. Another similar type of error is the different title of Appendix I in the Contents verses the title on the last three pages of the Appendix. The Bibliography is combined with a Guide to Further Reading and organized thematically but not along the same themes as the chapter divisions, which makes it tedious for reference.

Angkor Life, and Reporting Angkor

The other two books reviewed here are surprisingly similar to each other. They are a small format with approximately the same number of pages and have black-and-white illustrations. Both feature the Khmer people of the Angkor Period, from the early ninth to the middle of the fifteenth century, and they are mainly modern interpretations of an account written by Chou Ta-Kuan (Wade Giles spelling) or Zhou Daguan (Pinyin), a Chinese emissary who lived at Angkor for nearly a year in the late thirteenth century. The account, originally in Chinese, was translated in to French by Paul Pelliot in 1951 and subsequently in to English by J. Gilman d'Arcy Paul. The Siam Society in Bangkok has published three editions in English.

The author of *Angkor Life*, Stephen O. Murray, has written eight other books and holds a degree in sociology of religion with post-doctoral training in anthropology. His on-the-site knowledge of Angkor is limited to one visit before the publication of the book. The book is divided into twenty-seven sections, with headings similar to those in Zhou Daguan's account. Three maps, a plan of Angkor, twenty-five black-and-white photographs, and twenty-one line drawings, make up the supporting material. End papers include a Glossary, a Chart of the Kings of Angkor, an annotated Bibliography, and an Index.

The book is meant to supplement exist-

ing guide books and the author states at the beginning that it is neither a history of the Khmer Empire nor an analysis of its art and architecture. He aims to summarize what is known about Khmer society in the Angkor period and the main focus, as with the other books in this review, is on the daily life of the people. Murray's knowledge of the Chinese language enabled him to use the Chinese account of Zhou Daguan as his main source. The bibliographical entries also indicate that he used French and German as well as English sources.

The Introduction includes the author's reasons for writing the book and his method of research, aspects that are usually contained in a Preface, rather than an introduction. The text begins with the arrival of the Chinese delegation at Angkor in the summer of 1296. The subsequent twenty-five chapters recapitulate the observations of Zhou Daguan on subjects such as jurisprudence, officials and law, dress and rank, women and child-bearing, funerary practices, houses, diet, festivals, the army, and many more.

On the topic of irrigation, the reservoirs, and rice growing the author presents his own opinions and the traditional view put forth by the French but he does not include the more recent thinking by modern scholars. It is surprising that Murray did not utilize the latest research that is widely available in such publications as those by Jacques Dumarçay and Michael Smithies, Ian Mabbett and David Chandler, and the *History of Cambodia* by Chandler.

The sub-title of the book contains two phrases that are confusing. First, 'Pre-Cambodian life 800 years ago' is misleading as 'Cambodia' is simply an English pronunciation of 'Kambuja', the earliest known name of the country. Second, Angkor Thom is not a 'monument' but rather a royal city enclosed by a wall with several monuments inside as well as the palace of the king and the buildings used for military and civil administration.

Some minor errors should be corrected in any future editions of the book. Murray

locates the reservoir near Preah Khan to the west but describes the temple of Neak Pean which is to the east of Preah Khan. The early ninth century capital of Hariharalaya was not part of Angkor as suggested in the Glossary and Yashodharapura is not the name used for the Khmer capital from AD 890 to 1451 nor is it now generally referred to as Angkor Thom. Yashodharapura was the so-called first Angkor when the capital was moved from Hariharalaya to Angkor and king Yasovarman built Bakheng as his state temple at the centre of Yashodharapura.

Reporting Angkor: Chou Ta-Kuan in Cambodia 1296-1297, by Robert Philpotts, is based on the French translation of Chou Ta-Kuan's account by Paul Pelliot. The book is divided into ten chapters plus an Introduction. Eight maps, seventeen line drawings by the author, and a Bibliography augment the text.

Philpott's account of Chou Ta-Kuan's stay at Angkor is a personal account that takes the reader back in time to the twelfth century where he tries to imagine what the life of the Khmer people was like. He speculates, for example, on what Chou Ta-Kuan may have been thinking when he arrived and how he, a Chinese representative of the Mongol empire, would be received not only by the Cambodians but also by the Chinese living in exile at Angkor, having fled from Kubalai Khan's rule. The text follows a pattern of setting up a descriptive backdrop and then the author imagines the surroundings. The judicial system, for example, is described amidst a background of an actual audience with Indravarman III presiding and handing down punishment. Philpotts even hypothesises that the king may have 'sometimes found the sovereign's duty of listening to the daily round of complaints a little tedious'.

The Introduction sets the historical background for Chou Ta-Kuan's arrival in Cambodia and chapters 1 and 2 include an interesting account of China in the thirteenth century which is supported by a map showing the pressure exerted by the Mongols on the region of Southeast Asia. Then he describes the arduous journey by sea from China to Angkor in considerable detail. The

Chinese junks, for example, were sometimes as 'white as snow' because of a lime wash applied to the exterior hull as a wood preservative and a worm repellent. He describes the passage through the confluence of the rivers at the Mekong and manoeuvring the Tonle Sap River to Angkor. The following three chapters deal with Chou Ta-Kuan's arrival at and settling in the royal city of Angkor Thom, and his exploring the city which includes a detailed description of the layout of the city. He notes that Chou Ta-Kuan was an astute observer of the people and things around him.

Philpotts, like Murray, relies on French sources for his description of the irrigation system and supports the existence of a 'waterway network'. Chapter 6 describes Angkor under the reign of Indravarman III and the religious background of the kingdom beginning with the Angkor period in the ninth century. Chapter 7 through 9 describe the women of Angkor and rites associated with them, such as the deflowering ceremony and marriage, and royal festivals and ceremonies, animals in the jungle, and flora and fauna. The final chapter recaps Chou Ta-Kuan's return journey to China. In summary, the three books reviewed here all add to our understanding of the Khmer civilization and life in the Angkor period. All three have approached the subject differently yet share a common theme. *The Khmers*, with the inclusion of the current thinking of modern scholars on various aspects of Cambodian history, and *Angkor Life* and *Reporting Angkor* with new interpretations of the only extant firsthand account, all make a positive contribution towards our knowledge of Cambodia's cultural legacy.

Dawn F. Rooney, Bangkok,
November 1997

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The Manchus

Pamela Kyle Crossley

Blackwell : Oxford, 1997, xv + 239 pages, 26 plates, 2 maps, Hardback, £20.00/\$29.95

To write a history of the Manchus is no enviable task: the story runs over centuries and across half of Asia, and has as actors a bewildering and shifting array of ethnic and economic elites striving for power and legitimation. For over two and a half centuries, during the Qing period from 1644 to 1911, the history of the Manchus is the history of China – a discontinuity or a continuity, depending on point of view. The author (Professor of History at Dartmouth College) addresses this problem briefly in the Preface, where she warns the reader that her book 'is not in any way a history of China'. Later (p. 3) she notes that 'when viewed as an empire and not as a dynasty, the Qing yields a more coherent picture'. Her book belongs to 'the ongoing reassessment of the Qing period to seek a new understanding of how and why 'Manchu' culture and identity are woven into the imperial history' (p. 13).

In other words, difficult choices must be made. Crossley handles the process of selection effectively and intelligently, returning to certain themes – Manchu identity as perceived and constructed by Manchu elites, by the Chinese, and by the progressively encroaching Europeans; educational and administrative policies; economic and social problems; the changing functions and fortunes of the 'bannermen'. She avoids the type of hindsight history that treats its subject as an orderly progression of events marching to an inevitable goal. History is multifaceted, not monolithic; a tangled web, not a straight march.

Chapter 1, 'The Paradox of the Manchus', sets the conceptual stage, dealing with ethnic characterizations (Tartar, Manchu, Sinification), the 'Qing Empire as a Historical Idea', and the relationship between historical sources cast in several languages. Chapter 2, 'Shamans and 'Clans': The Origin of the Manchus', sketches the geogra-

phy and culture of the Tungusic peoples of the Chinese North East as a 'Prelude to the Manchus', then deals with Manchu institutions, and the Manchu language and the 'Altaic idea'. Unfortunately the treatment of Indian scripts (p. 35) is quite wrong: read Kharosthi for 'Devanagari', then jump to the end of the paragraph.

Chapter 3, 'The Enigma of Nurgaci', brings us to the dawn of empire. The author juxtaposes different and contradictory traditional representations of Nurgaci (1582–1616), subsumed here as the 'myths of the Avenger', of 'Individual Supremacy', and of the 'Great Enterprise'. The contemporary account of Korean envoy Sin Chung-il is profitably exploited. Rather than give a history of battles, the author details the mechanisms of power that led to Nurgaci's rise from local chieftain to khan (self-declared in 1616).

Chapter 4, 'The Qing Expansion', deals with the rise of Nurgaci's son and successor Hung Taiji, who in the years 1635 and 1636 'publicly transformed the khanate into an empire', introducing the names 'Manchu' (for which see Appendix III, pp. 210–211) and 'Qing' (for which see Appendix III, pp. 212–213). The chapter sketches the drawn-out and sanguinary conquest of China and the ensuing problems, especially those centred on the bannermen. We are told that the Kangxi Emperor Xuanye, who has been compared to Peter the Great, 'went on to one of the most brilliant reigns that any ruler in the world can claim' (p. 87), but he remains faceless: a more careful account of his diverse intellectual enterprises would be expected. The chapter discusses Qing relations with the Jesuits, Mongols, Tibetans (but the powerful regent Sangye Gyatso was something more than a 'Tibetan official' [p. 99]), and Romanovs, and the burgeoning world trade.

Chapter 5, 'The Gilded Age of Qianlong', brings out the fascination of the Qianlong period – emperor as *cakravartin*, the great literary enterprises, the role of religion and Lamaism, and the notorious censorship (that has its parallels in modern communist

China). Chapter 6, 'The Lingering Death of the Empire', covers the disturbed 19th century: beset by population strain, environmental damage, rebellions, and encroachment by greedy and unscrupulous colonial powers, China was brought to its knees. Attempts at reform and revival failed. Interesting comparisons are drawn between the Qing and the Mughal, Romanov, and Ottoman empires.

Chapter 7, styled 'Epilogue: The Manchus in the Twentieth Century', opens with the increasingly virulent expressions of anti-Manchu sentiment, the 'deliberate racism' of the nationalist movement. Much of the chapter chronicles the fate of 'last emperor' Puyi. The treatment of the condition of the ordinary Manchus (nothing much more than two paragraphs, pp. 194–195) is insufficient.

Good maps are essential to historical studies. Unfortunately *The Manchus* has only two maps: these are inadequate, since important places mentioned in the text (e.g. Liaodong or Fushun) are not shown, and the reader is obliged to turn to the better maps in, for example, Gernet's *A History of Chinese Civilization* or Ebrey's *Cambridge Illustrated History of China*. Another problem is insufficient annotation: Chapter 1 has fifteen notes (the maximum), Chapter 4 only two (the minimum). The reviewer would like to learn more about the manipulation of the *cakravartin* concept and the *Mahākāla* cult in the reign of Qianlong: but not a single source is given. If it is true that a book for the general reader should not be overly burdened with notes, there must still be some means for the reader to follow up subjects of interest: perhaps a section on 'suggested readings' by chapter or theme. There is a good bibliography, listing works in Chinese, Russian, Japanese, and Manchu, among other more quotidian languages, but which source was used where?

The text is enhanced by twenty-six relevant and well-captioned plates. There are three useful appendices, including a table of the 'Reign Periods of the Aisin Gioro Rulers' and a glossary that discusses in

some detail a number of key terms (titles, names, ethnonyms), and a good index.

Altogether, although the quality is at times uneven, *The Manchus* is an intelligent and well-written treatment of a complex and demanding subject.

Peter Skilling, Nonthaburi,
November 1997

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Aerial Nationalism: a History of Aviation in Thailand

Edward M Young

Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995. xxiii, 330pp

There is probably no sphere of human endeavour in which progress in the Twentieth Century has been more dramatic than in aviation. The Wright brothers made the first tentative powered flights at Kitty Hawk in North Carolina in 1903; by 1969 Neil Armstrong and 'Buzz' Aldrin would walk on the surface of the moon. In the sixty-six years between these two historic events aviation made vast strides almost universally.

Edward M Young's *Aerial Nationalism* brings us a fascinating, comprehensive and scholarly account of how these developments took place in Thailand. The choice of Thailand for an aviation history may at first glance appear strange when the major advances in the conquest of the air were, naturally enough, mostly taking place in the wealthier and more industrialized nations of the West. Young's obsession with Thai aviation was sparked by a visit he made to the Royal Thai Air Force Museum at Don Muang Airport in 1962 when he was an impressionable fourteen-year old living in Bangkok where his father was then American Ambassador to Thailand. A second factor, as he was soon to discover, was the surprisingly early participation of Thailand in using the emerging technology to advance its own domestic and military

progress. As William M Leary is quick to point out in his Foreword to the volume, Thailand was able to do this without relying upon foreign advisers or capital.

The birth of aviation in Thailand coincided with the accession to the throne of King Vajiravudh in October 1910 upon the death of his father King Chulalongkorn. For the previous sixty years Thailand had been ruled by two men of superlative foresight, Mongkut and Chulalongkorn, both of whom had not only succeeded in keeping the predatory colonial powers at bay but had equally impressively set the country firmly on course towards becoming a modern state. Vajiravudh was imbued with the same awareness of the need to modernize and immediately saw the potential of the aeroplane as being integral to that process. It could also be used to demonstrate to its colonial neighbours, England and France, Thailand's continuing determination not to concede any further territory to these European powers.

Such was the situation in Thailand when the first aeroplane, a Henry Farman biplane, arrived in Bangkok in January 1911. Demonstration flights were made from the grounds of the Royal Bangkok Sports Club before large crowds, King Vajiravudh himself visiting the scene. Two of his brothers, the Army Chief of Staff Prince Chakrabongse and the Commander of the Army Engineers Prince Purachatra, were important and enthusiastic participants who would subsequently promote the military applications of flight. Young's story of Thai aviation takes off from this early event.

Chapter 1 takes us from those earliest days through the development of aviation up to the late 1920s. The author chronicles, in the rich detail which is a major characteristic of his book, the growth in the number of aircraft and pilots, with the gradual installation of the essential accompanying engineering and maintenance facilities; nor does he overlook the organizational aspects so important as the foundation permitting this progress. We learn how the nucleus of three pilots were trained in France in 1912-

1913 on Breguet biplanes and Nieuport monoplanes, how they returned to form the first Aviation Section under the Royal Siamese Army, and how they made the first flights in Siam by Siamese pilots. The leading personality, commanding air services from 1914 to 1932, was Major Luang Sakdi Sanlayawut (later Air Marshal Phraya Chalerm Akas) whom many would consider to be the father of Thai aviation. Watching demonstration flights in 1914 King Vajiravudh was moved to comment, 'I am delighted that we Thai are not bested by the Westerners; truly we can do whatever they can do.' As if to corroborate the Royal remarks, by May 1915 the first flight in a locally-constructed Breguet Type III was made, although the engine had been imported from France.

Siam entered World War I on the Allied side in 1917. The expeditionary force sent to the Western Front the following year included a flying unit consisting of no less than 115 pilots, 3 engineering officers and 252 mechanics. Although the war ended before the unit could have its first taste of aerial combat, the intensive training it received whilst in France laid solid foundations for the further development of both military and commercial aviation upon its return to Siam in 1919. Young leads us through the subsequent rapid expansion.

The early 1920s saw the beginning of airmail services in Siam, flying Breguet 14s to towns in the east and northeast of the country. From the start the service, the first in Southeast Asia, was a huge success, growing steadily in distance covered and quantity of freight carried. Limited passenger and medical evacuation flights were also inaugurated using a cabin version of the Breguet 14. Travel time between Korat and Nong Khai, for example, was reduced from 2-3 weeks overland to 3-4 hours. By the end of 1925 the Aeronautical Service had expanded to 750 officers and men and almost 200 aircraft.

During these years new and more powerful aeroplanes were extending existing airline services in America, Europe and else-

where. At home Major General Phraya Chalerm Akas faced severe budgetary constraints and even though the first Siam-designed bomber, the Paribatra, took to the air it was largely a period of enforced retrenchment. However, the new bomber was not entirely successful and was never produced in numbers; the search for more modern aircraft was once more pursued abroad, chiefly in considering models in production in America, England and France. The author writes in detail of the various aircraft and engines examined to replace the ageing fleet of the late 1920s. The end of the absolute monarchy in 1932 also marked the close of the early phase of aviation in Siam.

In succeeding Chapters 3, 4 and 5 Young examines the principal changes in Siamese aviation over the decade up to the 1941 Japanese attacks in the Pacific and South-east Asia. The reader may be at least mildly surprised to learn that government circles considered that a purely commercial airline could not be viable. Slow progress was the inevitable consequence.

It was, all the same, a period in which the development of international air routes through the region effectively obliged Thailand to participate, leading also to the vital decision to separate civil and military aviation. With its fleet of seven Fairchild 24s, and two Puss Moths, a substantial increase of internal air routes took place in the later years of the decade.

A similarly slow build-up of military air power was the principal feature of these years. Young tells us that by 1939 the Royal Thai Air Force had a first-line strength of four fighter and nine bomber squadrons made up of 48 fighter and 92 bomber aircraft; more were under construction. Gradually, by 1940, it had been transformed into an efficient fighting force – only just in time for its baptism of fire.

Young next recounts the events leading to the outbreak of hostilities between Thailand and French Indochina in 1940. The loss of territory to France in 1893 and 1907 was a sore that continued to fester and negotia-

tions for a new frontier agreement were in hand when France fell. But the Thai efforts failed. As tensions rose, incidents multiplied, with both sides bringing their forces to the ready. Provocative over-flights on both sides of the Mekong sparked the first combats which then continued sporadically for two months. A Japan-brokered cease fire brought the brief war to an end in late January 1941. In its first experience of combat the Royal Thai Air Force claimed to have shot down five French aircraft for the loss of three of its own; 17 French and about 10 Thai aircraft were destroyed on the ground. Thirteen RTAF personnel were killed and five wounded. Thailand recovered, albeit only temporarily, some 25,000 square miles of Cambodian and Laotian territory previously ceded to France.

The penultimate chapter of the book deals with the RTAF in World War II. Young deals cautiously with the somewhat equivocal attitude of Thailand in the immediate pre-war period. When the Japanese forces entered the country on 8 December 1941 brief resistance cost the RTAF more than 40 dead including a number of pilots. With no real alternative Thailand capitulated to the Japanese the same day. The Pact of Alliance with Japan signed on 21 December 1941 forced the Thai military, including the RTAF, into operations in support of the Japanese campaign in Burma. The author provides a detailed account of this contentious period in the history of the RTAF when its Vought Corsairs, Curtiss Hawk IIIs, Martin bombers and Nakajima Ki-21s were used against Allied forces in Burma and Southern China, as well as in defending its homeland against Allied air attacks. Later it became a vital link in supporting the Thai underground resistance.

The book concentrates on the years up to 1945 and only thirty pages are devoted to the history of Thai civil and military aviation over the fifty years of the postwar era. Thus only the main events of this long period in which so many major advances occurred can be recounted. Nonetheless Young rounds off his story with an impressively

concise summary of these years. The impact of political changes in neighbouring countries upon Thai military aviation is correctly stressed, whilst Thailand's share of the dramatic expansion of civil aviation worldwide is prominently featured.

Young mentions briefly the perceived threat posed to a rapidly expanding Thai International by Air Siam, founded in 1965 by Prince 'Nicky' Varanand, who was himself a former Thai International pilot. In fact Air Siam had only a short life, operating intermittently from 1970 to 1977, but it is surprising that Young does not devote a page or two to one of the great personalities amongst early Thai flyers. Prince Varanand, educated at Marlborough and Cambridge, joined the British Royal Air Force in 1942, spending 18 years as a fighter pilot in war and peace. In that time he flew Spitfires, Mosquitos, Meteors, Vampires, Venoms and Javelins before his resignation in 1960. He was a larger than life character, bent on enjoying every moment. Despite a potentially fatal encounter with a Messerschmitt 109 whilst he was with 132 Squadron in France in 1944, he went through the war, as he liked to recall, 'without even a nose-bleed'.

In later years he was fortunate to escape with a broken back and a crushed ankle in a Mosquito crash in which his navigator was killed. Flying was his life, an enthusiasm he never lost; even the 210 million Baht the failure of Air Siam cost him could not dim his pleasure in, as he said, 'What keeps my body and soul together'. He died in 1990.

As a former aviator, this reviewer understands well that spirit and the persistent desire to fly that it engenders. Those who have read Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Vol de Nuit* or *Terres des Hommes* will recognize the feeling. The extraordinary, almost magical exhilaration of solo flight, casting off the shackles of earthly bondage, is a never to be forgotten experience. Young, master chronicler of Thai aviation history though he is, has not apparently enjoyed this privilege shared by a now rapidly diminishing band of pilots who flew solo in the pre-jet era.

The book contains four appendices, forty-two pages of notes arranged by chapter, an extensive list of sources and references, and a comprehensive index. The twenty-eight pages of black and white photographs are of considerable historical interest but most have not reproduced well. Published in the Smithsonian History of Aviation Series the volume respects the high standards of printing and binding one may expect from the Smithsonian Institution Press. There are a few misprints and some varied spelling of proper names but these are very minor blemishes. No doubt the author has long since discovered that the top illustration opposite page 172 (and on the dust cover) is not of Prince Chula Chakrabongse, who was only three years old in 1911, but of his father, Prince Chakrabongse Bhuvanath.

With this admirable, scholarly volume Edward M Young has made a distinguished contribution to the literature of aviation history in general and a very detailed addition to one facet of the history of twentieth century Thailand. It is a work of lasting value that is unlikely to be surpassed for many years to come.

Peter Rogers, Bangkok
July 1997

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Burmese Manuscripts. Part 3, Catalogue Numbers 432–735 Compiled by Heinz Braun assisted by Anne Peters, edited by Heinz Bechert.
Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart 1996, xxx + 476 pages. Hardback.

This is the third part of the catalogue of Burmese manuscripts in German collections, in the series *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* (Band XXIII). Like part 2, it deals with the collection of the Berlin State Library. The present volume catalogues 119 manuscripts containing 304 texts. The oldest manuscript, dated to CE

1643, is the oldest manuscript known so far in German collections. Five manuscripts belong to the late 18th century, while 115 were produced between 1882 and 1896. Almost all are written on palm-leaf: the exceptions are one black paper accordion book (*parabaik*) and seven lacquered manuscripts. Of the latter, six are *Kammavācā*; one (§ 576) is a fragment of the *Sammohavinodanī* which may be a rare survival from a royal library. The catalogue includes a transcription of a woven ribbon (*sarsegyo*: § 580), used to wrap a manuscript.

The manuscripts catalogued are in both Burmese and Pāli, and cover a wide range of Burmese literature: from Tipiṭaka, commentaries, and subcommentaries, to non-canonical and grammatical works, all along with their *nissaya* (word-by-word Burmese glosses), to Burmese compositions on a number of themes. A list given in the Introduction shows that in addition to many familiar texts, the collection includes a number of rare texts, some hitherto unknown, others known only by name. One text, the *Rājanīti* (§ 733), is a rare example of a Sanskrit text in Burmese script.

The format is that of the previous catalogues. It gives a detailed physical description (which includes pagination, marginal titles, date, donor, etc.), and a transcription of the opening and closing passages of the text, the latter often cited at length. The title, nature of the work, identity and biographical details of the author, etc., are discussed as appropriate, and cross-references are given to other catalogued manuscripts or printed editions. At the end of the volume are indexes of A. Works, B. Authors, C. Scribes, Donors, and Former Owners, D. Geographical Names, E. Dates of Manuscripts, F. List of Manuscripts.

The study of Burmese manuscript traditions and literature remains in its infancy. Like its predecessors, the clearly-presented catalogue supplies a wealth of data for this study, and for research on Theravāda Buddhist literature in general. The notes on the authors often amount to biographical-cum-bibliographical essays, and the transcrip-

tions of the colophons give valuable information on popular passages, verses, and aspirations. With its high standards, the catalogue is a welcome addition to the field.

Peter Skilling, Nonthaburi,
November 1997

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A Handbook of Pāli Literature

Oskar von Hinüber

(Indian Philology and South Asian Studies,
Vol. 2)

Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter,
1996. DM 195, xiii + 257 pages.

Oskar von Hinüber's *Handbook of Pāli Literature* represents a great advance in our knowledge of the subject, and is bound to take the field as the most comprehensive and reliable reference work for the foreseeable future. It deals with all aspects of the literature (except for medicine, law, and philology, to be dealt with by other scholars in future publications). The sequence of titles is largely based on that of the *Epilegomena to the Critical Pāli Dictionary* (Copenhagen, 1924–), which itself broadly follows the traditional Theravādin system of classification. Thus the book starts with the 'Theravāda Canon' – the Tipiṭaka, in classical sequence – followed by 'Paracanonical Texts' and 'Chronicles', and 'Commentaries', 'Handbooks', 'Sub-commentaries', 'Anthologies', 'Cosmological Texts', then 'Poetry', 'Collections of Stories'. A section is devoted to 'Pāli Literature from Southeast Asia'. The two final sections deal with 'Letters and Inscriptions' and 'Lost Texts and Non-Theravāda Texts Quoted in Pāli Literature'. The handbook includes an extensive bibliography and five indexes. The layout is clear, and the book is a pleasure to use.

In the foreword the author notes that he has 'attempted to deal with as many titles as possible, in order to give a survey of Pāli literature as comprehensive as possible'.

The introduction gives a survey of previous work on the subject, both European and traditional. As a handbook, the text is necessarily concise, but this does not prevent the author from supplying a wealth of information. Each entry gives bibliographical references: to editions, translations, commentaries, and specialized studies. Compact descriptions deal with the structure, contents, and special features of sections of the Canon or individual works; brief critical analyses discuss the origin and evolution of terminology and classifications. In addition to better known texts the handbook describes lesser known texts or genres, such as letters and inscriptions. Many of the titles, including some from Southeast Asia, are here discussed in English for the first time.

Errors in English or typography (e.g. on p. 45, § 88, read *Dhammapada* for *Dhammapda*) are few and far between, and do not effect the value of the work. Otherwise I have very few complaints. On p. 33, the name of the first division of the *Majjhimanikāya* should be *Mūla-* rather than *Mahā-paḍāsa*. Note 427 (p. 124) states that the 'reconstruction of the Skt. form of both the name of the author and title [of the *Vimuttimaggā*] are uncertain'. In fact, that the name of the author was Pāli Upatissa/Skt. Upaṭiṣya seems well-established: it is the name of the translator into Chinese that is decidedly uncertain. That the title was Pāli *Vimuttimaggā*/Skt. *Vimuktimārga* is also quite certain. There has been some confusion about the date of translation into Chinese, and I suspect the footnote means to record that 'the reconstruction of the Sanskrit form of the name of the translator is uncertain, and there has been some confusion in modern sources about the date of the translation'. In n. 604 (p. 174) King Tiloka's dates are given as 1142–1487: this seems a mite long, and I suspect the first date should be 1442.

The price of the de Gruyter edition is rather intimidating. Fortunately an Indian edition has recently appeared, published by Munshiram Manoharlal (New Delhi) at Rupees 375. This makes this important work

accessible to students and scholars in the subcontinent at a reasonable price.

Peter Skilling, Nonthaburi
November 1997

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