

womb), and early childhood education are the elements that shape personality. The last of these elements confirms the important function of nurture. That is to say, one can still have heirs through adoption.

Chapter 2 enlists evidence of adoption and the author's interpretation of it. Topics covered include adoption of *wai-tsu* 外族 (relatives through a female line), uxori-local marriage, adoption across surname line, posthumous adoption, etc. In Chapter 3 the author, using genealogies, further analyzes adoption through case studies. She points out several facts worthy of special mention, one of which is that "the adoption of sons related through the female line, be it maternal, affinal, or sororal, occupies a middle ground between agnatic adoptions and adoption of non-kinsmen" (99). In Chapter 4, through a study of Ming and Ching fiction, the author concludes that adoption, especially the problem of conflicting loyalties, is mostly a kind of fictional portrayal.

As for the reason why adoption was more popular in the Ming and early Ching than in the period before the Tang dynasty, the author hints that "by the Ming, the aristocracy of blood and birth had almost completely disappeared. The expansion of the examination system, the growth of urbanism, and increasing commercialization contributed to a more fluid society. The blood lines of one's father were less significant than they had been during the T'ang" (81). However, this interpretation only explains part of the phenomenon.

In fact, the author, when analyzing her evidence, assumes that the period from Confucius to the Ching dynasty and the area from Central China to Fukian and Kwangtung, the southeastern part of China that was incorporated into Chinese civilization in the later period, are more or less homogeneous. Whether such an assumption can stand or not is questionable. In other words, periodical and regional differences can be explained not only by social and economic development but also by the heterogeneity of a Chinese society constituted by various ethnic groups, which may perhaps be an even more important factor. Future studies of Chinese social and cultural history should not neglect the heterogeneity of Chinese society.

Sung-Hsing WANG  
Chubu University  
Kasugai, Japan

#### *SOUTHEAST ASIA*

WIJEYWARDENE, GEHAN, editor. *Ethnic Groups across National Boundaries in Mainland Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990. 196 pages. Softcover S\$29.50/US\$18.00; ISBN 981-3035-57-9. Hardcover S\$39.50/US\$24.00; ISBN 981-3035-61-7.

This book is a collection of rather dissimilar papers on a common theme: ethnic groups and the more general phenomenon of ethnicity in Mainland Southeast Asia. The dissimilarity is not so much the result of each author's particular academic background or focus of investigation, as the result of the respective treatment of his/her materials. It fundamentally is a matter of epistemology and problematic.

This is best illustrated by the theoretical controversy that develops between Gehan Wijeyewardene in his Introduction and Rozanna Lilley in her Afterword, which exemplifies two different conceptions in anthropology regarding, in particular, what "ethnic groups" actually are. While Lilley stresses that "questions of definition cannot be taken for granted" and that "no assumptions can be made regarding internal cohe-

sion or boundedness" (176) of a so-called ethnic group, Gehan finds "enough reason to postpone the definition of 'ethnic group'" (9) and first outlines "for the sake of convenience" (6) a tentative taxonomy and conventional classification of ethnic groups in Mainland Southeast Asia. Clearly, the two authors are speaking a different theoretical language. And indeed, as Gehan notes, "the tension between these two views of ethnicity underlies all the papers, whether explicitly dealt with or not" (4).

Christian Bauer, a linguist, thoroughly explores (49 notes for a 23-page paper) language-related issues in the existing documentation concerning Mon in Burma and Thailand in order to assess the maintenance, development, or decline of the use of Mon language and dialects in these two countries and to establish the relation between a particular language and a given ethnic identity. The merit of this paper rests as much in the material and analysis presented as in the unanswered questions it raises.

In "Versions of Ethnic Identity," Gehan, extrapolating from a consideration of material collected on the Tai Lu in Xishuangbanna (PRC) and in Mae Sai (Thailand) and a discussion of three recent books published in Thai, outlines historical and political issues involved in the relations of the Kingdom of Thailand with its Tai-speaking neighbors, and their different perceptions by the peoples concerned. In this contribution to the topic of "ethnic" groups and identities, the author reiterates that he does not intend to let himself be drawn into controversies about "questions of definition" regarding the concept of "ethnicity" and that he rather takes for granted that "'Tai/Thai' ethnicity comprises three social facts—'being Tai (or Thai),' 'speaking Tai (or Thai),' and 'being Buddhist'" (66).

Chothira Satyawadhna's paper is a comparative study, based on her own data, of the kinship and affinity systems of three Mon-Khmer-speaking ethnic groups in the "Thai-Yunnan periphery." On the basis of her interpretations of indigenous myths and beliefs and conjectured dynamics of "historical process and change" (91), she traces and outlines a "devolutionary process created by both internal economic conditions and external political power" (97). This enables her to propose an "evolutionary theory of the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy" (90) for the Laveue and Wa, and "the other way around" (97) for the Lua of Nan. Chothira's indiscriminate and controversial use of concepts forged for the study of kinship and affinity systems (e.g., patrilineal and matrilineal unification are equated respectively with male or female "dominance") confronts us with a whole "set of theoretical assumptions" (96) whose strong ideological overtones weaken credibility.

Douglas Miles's paper is a comparative study of the kinship and affinity systems of the Pai Yao of Poulung (Guangdong RPC) and of the Iu Mien of Pulangka (Thailand). Seeking to "explain the difference" (140) in the "development of Yao kin groups into patrilineal or bilateral descent units" (135), he proposes that it be attributed to different adaptive strategies in coping in one case with the shortage of land and in the other with the scarcity of labor. Although Miles is convincing when he outlines the inner logic of each system and the way it is combined with the local "regional agrarian exigencies," he is less so when he reverses the proposition and suggests that the latter have determined the former.

In his paper titled "Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Nation-State," Ananda Rajah focuses on the differences that exist, within the "same" ethnic group, between the Karen on either side of the Thai-Burmese border and the Karen separatist movement, and outlines three different ways to "be" Karen. Of particular interest is his reconstruction of the ethnogenesis and "invention" (121) of a Karen nationalist identity.

Recalling the role of colonization in the formation of modern Southeast Asian nation-states and in the imposition of artificial boundaries on a unified ethnographic

region, Nicholas Tapp outlines a process of "historical marginalization" of ethnic minorities in border areas and their "increasing vulnerability . . . to manipulation and exploitation by centrist administrations" (149).

Both Rajah's and Tapp's papers, notwithstanding their differences, have a similar quality: in Lilley's words, to "simultaneously pursue a detailed contextual analysis and the portrayal of a macro-political order" (182).

The most interesting aspect of this book is perhaps the global picture that it draws of contemporary Anglo-Saxon social studies in Southeast Asia regarding "ethnic" and "ethnicity" issues and of the different approaches commanding it. It serves to underline, if need be, that a modern comprehensive anthropological theory of ethnicity in Southeast Asia remains to be formulated.

Y. CONRAD

Tribal Research Institute, Chiangmai University  
Chiang Mai

#### THAILAND

WAJUPPA TOSSA, translator and editor. *Phādāēng Nāng Ai: A Translation of a Thai-Isan Folk Epic in Verse*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press (London and Toronto: Associated University Press), 1990. xii+174 pages. Appendices, indices, map, bibliography. Cloth US\$34.50; ISBN 0-8387-5139-3.

This volume makes accessible one of the literary treasures of the Thai Northeast. It presents the epic romance of a legendary local prince (Phādāēng), whose love for a princess (Nāng Ai) leads to struggles against the serpentine *nagas*, who ultimately triumph. The original text, some 3000 lines of poetry, is translated into English in a style intended to capture quite directly the original Thai/Lao metrical form. The translation is accompanied by a wealth of notes, commentary-discussions, lists of persons, places, relevant terms, and a select bibliography.

The poem is but one from the rich Thai-Isan tradition, but it is especially well known to the Thai audience, having been designated as secondary school supplementary reading by the Thai Ministry of Education, with publication in 1978. There is even a Thai popular song about the leading characters.

The translator is on the staff of Srinakharinwirot University, Mahasarakham, which has been instrumental in a movement to foster Thai-Isan cultural awareness and to preserve traditional local texts and artefacts. "Isan," itself a Bangkok-defined term meaning "Northeast," raises some interesting issues involved with the book's main project. Over the past two decades Thailand has witnessed an upsurge of interest in different regional traditions and cultures—a counterpart to a more unified construction of Central-Thai-based "national culture" emanating from Bangkok. A Thai term, *thongthin-niyom*, has even been coined to refer to this awakening of "regionalism."

In Northeastern villages, where the text of *Phādāēng Nāng Ai* is still a part of living oral tradition, and where palm-leaf versions of the text are still to be found, the regional/central synthesis is a matter of course. When "Isan" farmers speak their native language they still routinely claim they are speaking "Lao" and refer to themselves as "Lao" as opposed to "Thai," although bilingual villagers may become "Thai-Isan" when speaking Thai.