

people. While the authors recognize that the sample here is limited, the stories "are of such a quality that they deserve being preserved for . . . future research" (22).

The reader should be aware that this single volume is of little value alone. In order to understand the entire formidable collection of folklore, it is necessary to juggle and make references to the other volumes. This is true for several reasons. First, in FTK 3 (xxx), we are told that FTK 1 set out ten categories of stories, but by FTK 2 this already required a "slight revision." In FTK 3, the authors establish a more complete set of categories, and this is the list that is also reprinted at the beginning of FTK 4. In order to understand this unfolding of categories, the reader is left to refer to several different volumes. Second, if the reader wishes to know about the Kammu people, he will be referred to FTK 1 for a "very brief" introduction (FTK 4, p. 11); however, we are told that there is a much more extensive article of the same name in *Kammu Year*. And to grasp the importance of the section entitled "Folklore Comments on the Tales," the reader is often referred back to stories and themes in other volumes in this series and to the Stith Thompson index of motifs. I think you get the picture.

The look of the volume under review—because of the use of a laser printer and a modified, diacritical Apple Macintosh Geneva font—is superior to many of the other volumes. For some odd reason, however, the density of the typeface varies from section to section. A list of errata leads me to believe that the producers of this volume were the victims of a bug in Microsoft WORD 3.x that seemingly indiscriminately cut off lines at the tops of pages (this was corrected in version 4).

After looking through several volumes in this series of Kammu folklore, the reader cannot help but be impressed by this project's breadth; he also cannot help but note that the series is still evolving, and there is nothing wrong with that, except that this makes the going a bit rough at many turns. This is indeed a valuable (albeit occasionally arcane) collection of stories and we should be grateful for the tenacity of everyone involved. This reviewer, however, will wait to purchase the whole collection after it has been reedited with a comprehensive and more definitive introduction—or wait to see the movie.

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CONDOMINAS, GEORGES. *From Lawa to Mon, from Saa' to Thai: Historical and Anthropological Aspects of Southeast Asian Social Spaces*. Occasional Paper of the Department of Anthropology. Translated by Stephanie Anderson, Maria Magannon, and Gehan Wijeyewardene. Canberra: Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, 1990. xi+114 pages. Maps, illustrations, glossary, bibliography. \$A15.00; US\$15.00; ISBN 0 7315 0891 2.

It is hoped that these painstaking efforts of a whole team to translate into English two early essays (respectively published in 1974 and 1976) by Prof. Georges Condominas, and reprinted in his *L'espace social à propos de l'Asie du Sud-Est* already ten years ago, will stimulate new research in English-speaking anthropological circles, especially in the context of the Thai-Yunnan Project. Both essays deal with fields very close to Yunnan: the Lawa of Northern Thailand and the Tai of North Vietnam.

In the first one, Prof. Condominas uses a contribution to the hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Thai National Museum as a pretext to recall one of his 1958 traveler's notes on a "Lua' tomb" encountered in a mountain pass a three-hours' walk away from Mae Phon on his way to the Karen village of Me'ekhi in Amphur Chomthong. His hope in publishing this paper was to have this "tomb" excavated, but this does not seem to have happened, to his knowledge or mine. With a bold imagination (frowned at sometime later on by his friend, the late archaeologist Bernard-Philippe Groslier),¹ he assumes that the circular shape of this "tomb" indicates a kind of princely burial, hence the past existence of a "broad social space of the kingdom type." And as supplementary evidence he points out the existence of a kind of leading (priestly) lineage found in every Lua' (Lawa) village, known as *samang*, representing the descendants of a legendary Lawa king. (In my opinion this word is to be compared with the word *ramang* used among the Wa, to indicate the head of a village confederation. The hypothetical Lawa kingdom may have been nothing more than a tribal chiefdom.)

Then follows a brilliant analysis of the Suvanna Kamdeng and Lamphun Chronicles in Camille Notton's translation, where we learn that Camadevi, the Mon princess who founded Lamphun, may well have been born a Lawa herself, and that the claims of the Lawa king Virangkha (who had his "capital" on the Doi Sutthep) to marry her may have been well founded, "because he rightly demands that the rules be observed, in this case the conclusion of a preferential marriage (with his matrilateral cross-cousin, for example)." At this point we start wondering if this interpretation of the chronicles is not somehow too farfetched. If the Lawa of Thailand, or the Khmu' of Laos, ever had a political structure comparable to a kingdom, it should still be found among the Wa of Burma and China, who never let their social space be controlled by the Tai. Moreover, the success with which the Tai political system infiltrated Proto-Indochinese autochthons could hardly be explained, had it met with a strong local structure.

This is precisely the subject of the second essay, in which Prof. Condominas, writing this time in honor of K. G. Izikowitz, attempts a sociological explanation of the swift and wide expansion of the Tai in Indochina, taking as a sample study the case of an "intermediary social space," namely, the "Twelve Tai Principalities" of North Vietnam, which he sees as a "confederation." The structure of this Tai society, basically hierarchized in five classes (the nobility, the ranked administrative notables, the priests and heralds, the peasants [further subdivided into "free" peasants and bound peasants], and the domestic servants) is better known since the late K. G. Izikowitz published his "Notes about the Thai," and through recent Vietnamese studies.

Prof. Condominas's paper has the great merit of presenting some extracts from these studies, mostly out of reach of Western scholars. Furthermore, it includes a piece of ethnography, collected in a Laha village he visited together with the well-known French linguist, A. G. Haudricourt. Not only were the Laha, a Kadai group, so well incorporated into the Tai political system that their own ethnicity had been completely blurred (until it was rediscovered by Vietnamese ethnologists), they were also able to provide the author with their own perception of the social structure from the angle of a village of non-Tai dependents. Thus appears an ingenious system whereby everybody can find their rightful places, a system capable of incorporating village communities of any ethnic origin into the single structure of a well-organized territory (the Tai significantly call a country *ban muong*, "villages and burg," showing the corporate structure of the burg of the lord and the village communities within his

territory.

How is one to characterize such a system? Prof. Condominas proposes many solutions without really choosing any of them. In my opinion, "feudal serfdom" could be appropriate when one learns that the land belongs to the lord and "the peasant has absolutely no right to private ownership." On this point, Prof. Condominas shows some logical contradictions when he tries to ascertain the rights of the village community over its territory and the overall ownership of the *muong* by its lord. The choice of the term "free peasants" to translate the Tai word *pai* may also be misleading, even given the French historian Georges Duby's definition of the term as used in early European mediaeval history. The *pai* (as already noted by ROBERT 1941) were more likely the upper strata of the serfs, considering the number of duties and corvées they had to provide. Their status is nevertheless high as potential warriors, and they retain a share of their community's rice fields in exchange with various corvée duties as long as they do not leave their village and their *muong*. If they took refuge in another *muong* they would lose their status and fall under the dependence of the local lord. But there were still lower strata: the non-Tai incorporated groups; and the system gave to every one a different status associated with different duties. The ethnic bias differentiating the Tai and the Saa' provided a further hierarchical organization of social values.

As to the relationship between European feudalism and this Tai example of an Asian feudal system, I disagree with Prof. Condominas and would instead see the similarities, especially when one considers the ownership of the land and the close relationship between the lord and the peasants, and would readily side with Marx and Wittfogel in this discussion. Finally, when the Tai political system moves from "intermediary social space" to a larger scope while attaining the plains of Thailand, I am not sure that we need to call upon a passage to the Asiatic mode of production in order to explain necessary adjustments.

In conclusion, because of its immense erudition and the problems it raises, this book should be read and reread, keeping in mind, however, that it is but a stage in the process of a very fascinating research, which has been continued and led to further developments in France (for example) by the Tai Project of the Research Centre on the Anthropology of South China and the Indochinese Peninsula, C.N.R.S., Paris.

NOTE

1. See note 59, p. 126, at the end of his paper: "Les Syam Kuk des bas-reliefs d'Angkor Vat" in *Orients: pour Georges Condominas*, Paris: Sudestasié, 1981: "Condominas has scented the Lawa role before the Thais' coming (here quoting the present essay). . . . I readily follow him except for some archaeological facts he mentions, and which seem to me heterogeneous in time and space as well." Groslier has carried out the excavation of one of the circular earthworks in Cambodia to which Condominas has compared the Lua' tomb.

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