

by an early death and this work published posthumously on his behalf, perhaps he would have tied up some of the loose ends. Still, his intellectual style was refreshingly open and exploratory. Clearly we have lost a talented anthropologist.

We are indebted to the Trustees of The Richard B. Davis Fund for facilitating publication of this fine work. Unfortunately it is marred by numerous typographical errors and garbled or even missing lines. Readers should also be warned that the index is so incomplete as to be a liability.

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WIJEYWARDENE, GEHAN. *Place and Emotion in Northern Thai Ritual Behavior*. Studies in Thai Anthropology 2. Bangkok: Pandora, 1986. 274 pages. Eight plates, bibliography and index. Hardcover. ISBN 974-87356-7-2.

This book is Dr. Wijeyewardene's first major work on the anthropology of the Khon Myang (Khon Muang/Uuan/Northern Thai people) and follows a number of highly informative and theoretically challenging papers which have come from his pen since the late 1960s (cf. Wijeyewardene 1968, 1970, 1977, 1981, 1984). As one might expect, on the basis of Wijeyewardene's earlier, shorter, works, the present volume is replete with fascinating ethnographic detail and thought-provoking analyses. It is also one of the worst-edited and most poorly-published books that the present reviewer has seen in some time! But let us begin with the positive.

The major ethnographic thrust of this book is to describe and analyze the ritual idiom of the Khon Myang as witnessed by Wijeyewardene, mostly in the mid-1970s and specifically within the urban settings of Nan (33-62) and Chiang Mai (78-110; 119-236). Now and again, the author also has recourse to rural materials which he gathered in the mid-1960s, in a village not far from Chiang Mai (147-149). But this book is by no means a traditional ethnography, in which the writer introduces his principal subject matter through background materials concerning other characteristics of the study community or communities. Instead, Wijeyewardene expects a great deal of prior knowledge of his reader: as he moves back and forth from particulars of Northern Thai ethnography to Thailand in general, to Southeast Asia and even as far afield as Sri Lanka. Thus, for example, we go from the religio-philosophical-cum-political disputes of certain present-day, nationally famous, Thai monks (none of them resident in north Thailand) (20-32), to the details of daily life in a Nan city monastery (34-36), to a seventeenth-century European's report on religious life in the Kandyan Kingdom of central Sri Lanka (67-68), to the iconography of ancient Champa (73-75), to the agricultural rituals of the non-Buddhist Tai Dam (Black Tai) people of northern Vietnam (75-76), to the ancient chronicles describing the foundation of Chiang Mai (83-90), back to the ethnographic details of the dedication of a *bod* (building for higher ordination ceremonies) in a Nan monastery (95-108), to a comparison of higher ordination in Thailand and Sri Lanka (110-117), to the sacred geography of Chiang Mai city (124-128), to present-day spirit mediums in Chiang Mai (153-228). (The last-mentioned data are, without doubt, the richest in the whole book.) In the end, all these disparate threads are drawn together, and my purpose here is not to criticize Wijeyewardene's approach, but merely to warn that this is not a book with which to begin one's studies

of Khon Myang culture and society.

Beyond the avowed Northern Thai focus of this book, *Place and Emotion* clearly has a much broader geo-cultural significance. Following Ling (1973), Wijeyewardene begins by countering the oft-repeated view that early Buddhism was essentially an "other-worldly" religion, concerned more or less exclusively with the individual's (in effect, the ordained monk's) search for spiritual perfection. On the contrary, "The doctrine was preached to the rulers and arbiters of contemporary society and the *sangha* [monastic order] was not a religious elite concerned only with the individual salvation of its members *outside this world*, [rather, its members were] . . . exemplars of a way of life *in this world*" (14). "Theravada Buddhism . . . was directed at those in power, those with authority to restructure society *in order to create the conditions* [*i.e.* socio-political conditions] in which the philosophical aims of the religion may fall within the reach of the consciousness of all its members" [all emphasis added] (238).

Having demonstrated the "this worldly" orientation of Buddhism *from its very beginnings*, Wijeyewardene's next—and most important—task is to resolve what he terms (67) "the Theravada problem," namely, "the kind of relation that exists between canonical Buddhism and *the totality of religious behavior* [my emphasis] in those five modern nation states in which this religion has been, until recently, the dominant one—Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia." So far as the anthropology of mainland Southeast Asia is concerned, this translates as the old problem of what precisely is the relationship between the people's Buddhist traditions and their more ancient (even if some of the elements are not so old) animistic folk religion. Anthropologists with field work experience among Southeast Asia's Theravada Buddhist peoples have taken positions on this problem ranging from the view that Theravada Buddhism and folk religion are two, quite separate, religious traditions and are so perceived by the people themselves (cf. Spiro 1967, 264–280), to the opinion that the two traditions constitute a single integrated worldview (cf. Pfanner 1962, 367; Tambiah 1970, 41; Keyes 1977, 115). Most scholars seem to have taken the view that Theravada Buddhism and animism can exist side-by-side (whether as separate or co-joined religious traditions) because they are seen by their shared adherents to satisfy quite different ends. Thus Buddhism, so the argument goes, offers its devotees a way to achieve longterm spiritual progress through the acquisition of merit in accordance with the doctrine of *karma* (namely that good deeds inevitably alleviate suffering while bad deeds, no less inevitably, cause it to occur). Animistic beliefs, by contrast, are seen to satisfy people's immediate needs, particularly in the healing of sickness and the resolution of current social, economic and other problems. The great importance of Wijeyewardene's book is that it demonstrates—quite convincingly—that *both* Buddhism and animism are concerned *both* with the immediate acquisition of power (cf. p. 13) and with *karma* and the pursuit of merit (cf. p. 238). In effect, folk Buddhism (like its canonical counterpart) is no less "this worldly" in orientation than is folk animism.

Returning now to the specifically Northern Thai data in this book, Wijeyewardene is concerned with three ritual complexes: first, that which is overtly Buddhist and which centers, for layman and monk alike, on the local monastery; second, that which centers on secular authority, symbolized by the cult of the city pillar; third, that which is centered on spirit mediums.

In examining the first complex, specifically in Nan city, Wijeyewardene concludes (49) that

while some participants in the religious system, or ritual system, may be con-

cerned with the doctrinal implications of what is being done, and while others may be totally or partially engrossed in the manipulation of the system, for their view of salvation, or for material prosperity, many others are quite likely to be participants without any clear conscious notion of why they are in it; their motivation being, and their satisfaction arising out of, the participation in it.

Further on (62), Wijeyewardene interprets a Nan monk's sermon as an attempt "to get across the notion that the support of the religion is obligatory and its own reward, *it is an appeal to devotion* [my emphasis]. The aim is to create a society in which a religious life may be lived." And he comments (63), "the monks, quite expectedly, see the support of the religion, and this means largely the support of the *sangha*, as the greatest social good. One must emphasize *social*, for the good is of this world. The rites concerned are conducive to other beneficial results, but the main advantage is the creation of the Buddhist society."

For the second ritual complex, the cult of the city pillar, Wijeyewardene turns to Chiang Mai. Chiang Mai's city pillar, known locally as *Inthakhin*, is one of many such pillars, generically called *lak muang*, which he interprets as "in many ways the pre-eminent object representing male power and political authority" (239). The annual ceremonies associated with this pillar, which significantly is located inside the compound of one of the city's best-known *Buddhist* monasteries, Wat Chedi Luang, are now organized by the Chiang Mai Municipal Council. Their traditional purpose is to offer a sacrifice to the pillar and its guardians (79), clearly manifesting the animistic dimension of Chiang Mai's religious life. And yet, they have received the imprint of Buddhist approval (79-80, 81), if not orthodoxy.

The third ritual complex concerns spirit mediumship in Chiang Mai (Ch. 6). As noted earlier, the data presented here are the richest in the book. Wijeyewardene observes (159) that 90% of Chiang Mai mediums are female, while those few males who operate as mediums tend to be effeminate. Thus the spirit-medium cults, being female-dominated, may be contrasted to the male-focused city pillar cult. In trance, Chiang Mai's mediums are possessed by a disparate company of supernatural beings, reverently termed *caw*, "lords." These *caw* appear as historical personages (such as the nephew of King Chulalongkorn), legendary figures (Luang Kham Daeng, hero of an old chronicle relating the myth of Chiang Mai's founding) or completely fabulous beings (Lady Crystal of the Great Cunt). Clients consult the mediums (and so the *caw* believed to possess them), for advice on illness, jobs, work problems, lost money, love affairs, travel and lottery numbers, and it is often said (163) that "the lord comes to help." But Wijeyewardene does not see the cult simply as another demonstration of the idea that spirits are for this world, the Buddha for the next. Just as Buddhism "demonstrates an integral blending of this-worldly and other-worldly ends, so does the ideology of the *caw* (163)". This is because the *caw* which are believed to possess the mediums are conceived, not as supernatural entities intent simply on doing good for good's sake, but rather as beings in search of merit, "expiating . . . bad *karma* by healing and helping humans, and by giving alms to monks and monasteries, organizing preachings, and constructing Buddha images (163)". The doctrine of *karma* is no less valid for the spirits than it is for the human mediums they possess.

There is much more of theoretical interest in this book than I can possibly hope to cover in this review, but I must not omit Wijeyewardene's final comments on the phenomenon of spirit-mediumship (248-249). Mysterious phenomena such as dissociation, conversion or altered states of consciousness, he writes, "are now recognized as part of the human behavioral repertoire." Hence he posits "some evolutionary function"

for these capacities. Noting that these "varied states of altered consciousness have to do with the ability of humans to cope with [abnormal] pain, trauma and stress" and that they even seem to prevent injury in certain cases of self-mutilation by devotees, he speculates "that such dissociation was a survival factor in . . . severe stress or trauma." To explain the female domination of the spirit-medium cult he concludes that "perhaps . . . for early humans and their immediate ancestors, the greatest trauma to which they could expect regularly to be subject, would surely have been giving birth to large-headed infants. The hypothesis then is that the capability for dissociation was at least partly an adaptive acquisition to cope with those evolutionary changes which were selecting for the birth of large-headed infants." This is certainly an intriguing idea.

It would be pleasant to be able to end this review here. But I must add that this book would have been very much better had the author edited his manuscript more thoroughly and had the publisher taken greater care with its production. The text is too often long-winded and lacking in coherence, and chapters and chapter sections sometimes end very abruptly. There are "sentences" without verbs and quotations which begin but are not ended. References sometimes are entirely omitted, incompletely cited, or mentioned in the text but omitted in the bibliography, and the style of citations in the bibliography lacks consistency. References to following chapters are incorrectly numbered. Some photographic plates are blurred or of minimal explanatory value, while parts of the text—particularly descriptions of ritual sequences—would have benefited greatly from photographic documentation. The description of the sacred geography of Chiang Mai in Chapter 5 almost demands a map.

Responsibility for many of these errors and omissions must be taken by the author. But Pandora Press should have demanded a revised manuscript and, given the great importance of this work, should have taken more care with its production. The binding of my review copy has already split! If Pandora does not upgrade the quality of its productions, Dr. Wijeyewardene (and others with similarly important manuscripts) would be well advised to look for more careful publishing houses.

To conclude: this is a fascinating and important, but poorly published, work.

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#### MALAYSIA

- WERNER, ROLAND. *Bomoh/Dukun. The Practices and Philosophies of the Traditional Malay Healer*. Studia Ethnologica Bernensia 3. Berne/Switzerland: The University of Berne, Institute of Ethnology, 1986. 106 pages. Drawings, photos and references. Paper sFr 21.—; ISBN 3-260-05152-X.
- WERNER, ROLAND. *Bomoh-Poyang. Traditional Medicine and Ceremonial Art of the Aborigines of Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Department of Publications, University of Malaysia, 1986. xxxii+632 pages. Map, plates, figures, references. Paperback ISBN 967-9940-10-1; Hardcover ISBN 967-9940-11-X.

Roland Werner is a physician with a long-standing interest in anthropology and ethno-medicine who has lived in Malaysia as an educator as well as a researcher. He is the author of several books on indigenous peoples of Malaysia (Werner 1974; 1975), and with the publication of *Bomoh-Poyang: Traditional Medicine and Ceremonial Art of the Aborigines of Malaysia* he has completed what he refers to as his "trilogy" on select cultural and oral traditions of the Aborigines of West Malaysia" (ix). This trilogy is supplemented by the publication of *Bomoh/Dukun: The Practices and Philosophies of the Traditional Malay Healer* which Werner calls a "select documentary" on traditional medicine in Malaysia (10). The two books complement each other: *Bomoh-Poyang* is a lavishly illustrated volume on the traditional medical beliefs and healing practices of the Mah Meri and Jah-Hët of West Malaysia, while *Bomoh/Dukun* is a brief, and more general, description of traditional Malay healing. In both books, Werner is careful to point out that he is not comparing traditional Malay medicine with Western medicine, and he draws the reader's attention to "the relationship between health, disease, and the wider moral, social and cultural environment in which members of society participate" (*Bomoh/Dukun* 11).

In *Bomoh/Dukun* Werner describes the training of Malay healers (*bomoh*, or *dukun*), and traditional concepts about anatomy, physiology, principles of diagnosis, etiology of "spiritual" and "physical" illnesses, the philosophy of healing, and various means of treating patients. The text is supplemented by many helpful illustrations, including drawings of ritual paraphernalia required for ceremonies, diagrams and photographs of these ceremonies, and schematic representations of Malay concepts of physiology and anatomy. Werner has distilled an immense amount of information into 106 pages by, in effect, presenting an annotated outline of traditional Malay medicine. The advantage to such a telegraphic approach is that the author covers a great deal of material quickly, and the scope of the traditional healers' knowl-