The most recent and musically least demanding of the theatrical *mawlum*—the *mawlum plün*—also uses stories of Central Thai origin. They are performed in a style heavily influenced by modern pop music, and Miller expresses fears that this degenerated genre will be even more popular in the future. It is a pity that he has not visited Thailand since he did his fieldwork to report on the actual situation today.

Miller's own spelling of Thai and Lao words has been used in this review which gives only very few of the hundreds of local concepts, titles, names, and terms used in the book. Miller uses a transcription system of his own invention suited for English readers, but it must be considered a shortcoming that the many Lao and Thai terms are not transcribed in a more strict linguistic fashion. The typical user of this book will have some previous knowledge of Thai or Thai terms and will be confused to see them spelled in a very individualistic manner. Especially the lack of tonal indications is a problem when an essential part of the study deals with the relation between words and melody. Fortunately all Lao and Thai terms are listed in a glossary at the end of the book with the spelling in the Thai alphabet and transcriptions in the Haas romanization with tonal marks. This glossary at the same time is a small dictionary as it gives a short explanation of all the terms listed.

While reading the book one often wants to be able to hear the impressive sound of the *kaen* and the dynamic drive of the *mawlum* singing and one feels the need to follow in sound the observations explained in the text—even the best transcriptions cannot replace the actual sound of the music. It is a pity that the book is not accompanied by a music casette with examples. One must rely on the records listed in the discography.

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MISCHUNG, ROLAND. *Religion und Wirklichkeitsvorstellungen in einem Karen-Dorf Nordwest-Thailands* [Religion and concepts of reality in a Karen village of northwest Thailand]. Studien zur Kulturkunde 69. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1984. Xv+362 pages. 16 plates. Paper DM 74.—; ISBN 3-515-03227-4. (In German)

The volume under consideration presents the results of eight months' research, especially in one Sgaw (*Cgaū* in the transcription used by Mischung) Karen village in Chiang Mai province in northern Thailand. Through close and friendly relations with many of the villagers and perspicacious observations, Mischung has managed to collect an impressive amount of material which he presents in a clear and enlightening way.

Yet to the present reviewer, the book has been difficult and depressing to read, because the tragedy of the doomed minority cultures of Southeast Asia is made very clear in the work.

The tragedy is by no means felt only on the side of the members of the vanishing culture, even the researcher gets his share. A researcher should be able to feel that his efforts are a link in a work in progress, but Mischung remarks in the preface that he has no hopes that his work will be continued. Although he worked in a comparatively traditional Karen village there were no more than three people who had a good command of the tradition. All three of them are now dead, and Mischung says that the conditions are similar in other Karen communities in the area.

Influenced by this tragedy, Mischung feels very strongly that it is part of his task as a researcher to preserve as much of the tradition as possible for the Karen themselves. As I see it, any researcher working on disappearing cultures should bear this in mind and endeavour to give a culture back to its bearers. Yet in my opinion Mischung should not have let this make him choose a rather poor missionary transcription for his scientific work. A separate volume of Karen texts in the missionary transcription would serve this purpose better, since it seems rather unlikely that the Karen will be able to profit by a scientific work in German. If in the future a Karen does acquire sufficient education to read a work in German, he will certainly be able to read his own language in the IPA as well.

The missionaries did not always manage to develop good orthographies, and it is certainly most debatable whether they have real success in converting the Southeast Asian minorities to Christianity. Many missionaries seem to feel that since they have rather many converts among the minorities, the minority peoples are particularly susceptible to the Christian creed and Christian moral concepts. Mischung on the other hand finds that the Karen convert to Christianity mainly for two reasons: they find that this sets them off as distinct from the majority peoples, and they find that it is cheaper to be a Christian.

In my work with the Kammu, I have found that also they convert for the same two reasons. Young Kammu men who have a hard time trying to accumulate the brideprice are most impressed by the fact that they are not supposed to pay brideprice for a Christian girl, the only thing they have to do is to convert. It is the missionaries' share in the tragedy that the creed which they hope will permeate the entire thinking and outlook of the converts often penetrates no deeper than the purse.

The fact that members of a minority use a creed foreign to the realm in which they live in order to set themselves off from the lowlanders is the tragedy of the majority peoples. Probably it is necessary for the Karen to find an effective means to segregate themselves from the lowlanders, since these—especially the minor officals—are equated with the intensely evil lesser area spirits residing in the jungle. It is much to be hoped that the King and his governors in whom the Karen along with other minorities put their trust will work to alter such adverse conditions.

In the wealth of information given on the Karen in the work, the report given on the Sgaw Karen's relations to their ancestors is so astonishing as to be almost unbelievable to anyone who has been working among the minorities in Southeast Asia. However, Mischung's account is the result of painstaking efforts and cannot be called into question. He is also well aware of the fact that the views his informants hold are totally different from those of other minorities, even from those of the Pwo Karen.

Ancestor worship usually seems to be founded on a *do ut des* principle. The ancestors receive food sacrifices and other gifts in order that they, on their side, further the prosperity of their offspring and protect them from accidents and illness. Thus contacts with the ancestors are regarded as essential for the well-being of the family and the entire community, and although the ancestors are deeply respected and revered they are not feared. Among the Kammu, for instance, the ancestors are supposed to

keep watch over the living and to screen them from assailing evil spirits which may cause calamities and diseases of different kinds. What is feared is certainly not the spirits of the ancestors. Instead one is afraid that they should become indifferent and withdraw their active help, as they may do, if anyone in the family offends them by breaking an important rule of conduct. Thus although the sacrifices to the ancestors may become most burdensome to a Kammu family in times fo affliction, the rites are seen as a means to better conditions. The stricken family is also able to find consolation and mental support from the contact with both the living and the dead members of the family.

The Sgaw Karen interviewed by Mischung are divided in their opinions about the ancestors. Elderly people seem more positive in that they regard ancestor worship as the factor that represents Karen-ship and the only effective means to keep the traditional society together. Younger people on the other hand are outspokenly negative, even agressive, in their statements: the ancestors are greedy ghosts who incessantly come from the land of the dead to extort chicken-meat and pork from the living and who torment their descendants with illness, if they do not fulfill the requirements at once.

This is, indeed, a most startling report, and it becomes even more shocking when we learn that the Sgaw Karen have found a means to cut off relations with their own ancestry. The method used to free the living from the departed involves a fluid consisting of seven filthy elements which are held to be abhorrent to the dead. In fact it ought to be even more of a deterrent to the living, since it should contain blood from a person who has suffered violent death and body fluid from a corpse. This sickening brew is " tattooed " into the skin of the living who thereby become repulsive to their dead ancestors with the result that these sever all relations with their descendants.

According to Mischung this process of freeing oneself from the ancestors originated among the Sgaw in Burma during the early decades of this century. The procedure bears so strong a resemblance to vaccination that it can hardly be accidental. The originator must have witnessed or heard about smallpox vaccination in order to conceive of the idea that infusing a fluid into the body could protect it against evil. In true tattooing, on the other hand, it is the ensuing patterns that are supposed to give security, the pigment used being of little consequence in this respect.

There is a great difference between gradually cutting down on the elaborate feasts given in honour of the dead and forswearing one's own ancestry in this drastic way. Mischung has gone deeply into the problem and he points out several factors that may be important for this development, such as the constraint the many family gatherings put on the family members, especially when they no longer live in the same village, the heavy economic burden the cult may represent in times of adversity and the shift from a matrilineal to a patrilineal kinship system.

To me it seems as if the latter were the decisive factor. The difficulty in summoning all the members of a kingroup in a more mobile society is shared by all ethnic groups—and not only in Southeast Asia—without the same traumatic effects. If a kinship group wants to continue the communion, it will certainly be able to solve these problems. One can for instance diminish the number of reasons for the gatherings, or one can let the absentees take part in effigy—there are always means to be found, and no society is so rigid that it cannot adapt itself to new circumstances.

That the cult of the ancestors has come to be regarded as such a waste of resources probably finds its explanation in the shift of the descent line. The meal eaten in communion with the ancestors still practiced in many families gives a clear indication that the relation between the living and the dead previously has been of a different,

positive nature. One simply does not "invite the dead for dinner," if one does not feel that they are an essential part of one's life.

Thus it seems more than likely that the maternal ancestors once had the protective tasks that are now assigned to the greater area spirits, which spirits are affiliated with the male sphere. The ancestor spirits have been deprived of everything of value they could give in return for the work, the bother, and the cost it takes to serve them a meal. Instead of being a gift to exhort the ancestors to help or to thank them for their services, the meal has become a bribe to prevent greedy ancestors from striking their descendants with afflictions.

As may be expected, the separation from the ancestors leaves the Karen in a religious vacuum that is very difficult to fill, since there is nothing in the indigenous religion that could take the place of ancestor worship. However, once the shift from matrilineal to patrilineal descent has been completed, the tension will perhaps ease off, so that the Karen will be able to hold their ancestors in esteem.

It is to be hoped that Roland Mischung will keep in touch with the village where he has conducted his research, so that we may have new reports on the development of this fascinating society.

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WICHIENKEEO, AROONRUT and GEHAN WIJEYEWARDENE, translators and editors. *The Laws of King Mangrai (Mangrayathammasart)*. The Wat Chang Kham, Nan Manuscript from the Richard Davis collection. Canberra: Department of Anthropology, The Australian National University, 1986. ix–xi+169 pages. Thai text, glossary. Paper US$13.00; ISBN 0–86784–775–1.

The Laws of King Mangrai contains two main components: a transliteration into modern Thai by Aroonrut Wichienkeeo of a manuscript written in Northern Thai script and language and an English translation by Gehan Wijeyewardene in collaboration with Aroonrut. The original belongs to the Royal Temple Chang Kham in Nan, northern Thailand. The transliteration and translation are based on a copy of the Chang Kham document made in the early 1970's for the late Richard Davis, a northern Thai specialist. The copy is housed in the Richard Davis Collection at the Australian National University, Canberra.

An introductory essay by Wijeyewardene locates the Mangrai manuscript in its cultural, linguistic and historical setting. It is one of several versions available in Modern Thai and/or Western languages of a law code purportedly proclaimed by King Mangrai (r. 1259–1317) for the guidance of his officials. Mangrai was the ruler of Nan, conqueror of the Mon-dominated Kingdom of Hariphunchai (modern Lamphun) and founder of the Lanna Thai Kingdom and its capital Chiang Mai. The Introduction includes a guide to Aroonrut's system of transliteration and there is a Lanna Thai/Thai glossary at the end of the volume. The English translation has section numbers and headings evoking the substance of each section, absent in the Thai version.

At some point, the document seems to have been damaged in storage or garbled in copying since some sections are undecipherable or unclear. The manuscript may