

carry out their religious education, and observe their living habits. (229–30)

But a bloody confrontation did occur between the Hui and their imperial Chinese rulers, Wang admits, in late Qing dynasty Yunnan. This breakdown of an otherwise harmonious relationship is attributed—not quite convincingly in this reviewer’s mind—to the general decline that Chinese society experienced under the late Qing emperors, and culminated in fierce discrimination against an erstwhile integral part of the Han-dominated Yunnanese polity.

Much more could be said of Wang Jianping’s work. I hope I have written enough to convince those interested in the subject that the book, despite many glaring editorial deficiencies, is well worth the often painful effort required to read it.

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THAILAND

WAJUPPA TOSSA, translator. *Phya Khanḵhaak, The Toad King: A Translation of an Isan Fertility Myth into English Verse*. Original transcription by Phra Ariyanuwat. Cranbury, NJ: Bucknell University Press, 1996. xii + 164 pages. Indices, glossary, illustrations, bibliography. Cloth US\$29.50; ISBN 0-8387-5306-X.

Phya Khanḵhaak is Wajuppa Tossa’s second translation of an Isan epic poem into English—the first being *Phā Dāng Nang Ai* (Diller 1992). Both texts are based upon written versions recorded by the late Phra Ariyanuwat Khemajari of Mahasarakham Province in northeastern Thailand, the region often referred to as Isan. This second translation is closer than the first to achieving the translator’s aim of recounting Isan tales in a readable style of English without divorcing them from their cultural context. It is revealing to summarize the translator’s motivations for these works as they are representative of the changes in Thai attitudes towards their culture that have taken place in recent years.

The translator is on the staff of Mahasarakham University, formerly a campus of Srinakharinwirot University. This university is among those at the forefront of research into, and the preservation of, Thai-Isan culture and literature inside Thailand. This research into regional languages and cultures has been part of a recent trend away from the homogeneous, Central Thai-based picture of Thai culture that has been promulgated by the Thai government from Bangkok since the turn of the century in order to establish and reinforce the concept of the nation-state “Thailand.” The increased awareness of regional differences is now a generally accepted concept, both politically and academically, and is referred to by the term *thongthin-niyom*, “regionalism.” The Isan case is especially interesting because its language, traditions, and culture are closer to the Lao than the Thais of the central river plains region surrounding Bangkok. However, for a variety of reasons the Thais have avoided close identification with the Lao, not least of which was the fact that after the 1975 communist revolution in Laos, the political leaders of both nations were diametrically opposed. Only recently have changes in both countries led them to begin to resolve their major differences. As a result the term “Isan” was, and still is, used extensively to describe the language, culture, literature,

and traditions in Thailand's northeast. It has only been in the last five or so years that the term "Thai-Lao" has begun to be used to describe the common heritage between Thailand's northeast and Laos. Indeed, in this volume we find the author acknowledging the close bond between Isan and Lao literature (11), whereas in her first translation she chose a story that she claimed was not found on the Lao side of the Mekong. At the same time the old tendency to maintain the separate categories of Isan and Lao languages is evident in the glossary, which is entitled "Glossary of Thai, Isan and Lao Terms" (1), although the individual entries are not labeled.

The translation of *Phya Khankhaak* is a part of Wajuppa's project to encourage interest and pride in the local language and literature among children of school age in the northeast as well as other regions of Thailand, as a counter to the dominance of the Central Thai language and culture (see WAJUPPA 1996). Wajuppa has correctly identified the need to preserve the language spoken in Isan, because it has been declining as the population of native speakers grows older. This has occurred primarily since the younger generation receive their education in Central Standard Thai and since many parents do not encourage their children to speak the local language because of its low status in Thai society. The local language has also lost its own script as a result of past political policies; in its place the Central Thai script has been adapted to form a nonstandardized hybrid sometimes referred to as "Isan language." The text upon which the translation was based is from a version written in this hybrid.

The tale of *Phya Khankhaak* is a folk legend that, like many other pre-Buddhist legends and beliefs of Thailand, has been integrated into the Buddhist faith over time. In this instance the tale has been incorporated into the Jatakas (tales of the Buddha's previous lives), with the tale's hero Phya Khankhaak as the Buddha-to-be. The tale is still sometimes recited by Buddhist monks during an elaborate rain-calling ceremony known as Thet Phya Khankhaak, briefly explained by Wajuppa in the Introduction (26–27). The story's connection to rain and drought, a defining characteristic of the arid Isan region, continues a theme found in Wajuppa's first translation, as does the appearance of Lord Thaen and the minor Thaens, probably the original proto-Thai sky gods, who are the providers of rain. Contained in the text are many cultural references to codes of expected social behavior and conduct that will be of specific interest to the anthropologist because the blend of the pre-Buddhist native customs and Buddhist moral teachings here is good material for comparison and contrast. The main moral teaching of the text in this regard is the obligation to perform one's duty, an obligation that, when not observed, will bring misfortune and punishment. Lord Thaen neglects his duty to provide the world with rain and suffers defeat and humiliation at the hands of Phya Khankhaak, who raises an army and defeats him in battle.

There are good explanations of the characteristics of deities, festivals, sacred objects, and other concepts in the glossary at the front of the book. Immediately before the main text of the story, the author also supplies the reader with a list of the story's main characters and the mythical geographical locations, thus providing a quick reference that the reader can return to at any stage. The illustrations are simple line drawings of the various deities and mythical creatures; strategically located throughout the text, they provide the reader with additional stimulus to accompany the tale. A list of illustrations is also given so that they can be easily located at other times.

Stylistically, Wajuppa's translation of *Phya Khankhaak* has improved upon her first effort, being less stilted and doing away with much of the Latin-derived vocabulary found in *Phā Dāēng Nang Ai*, although the syntactic inversion is still evident in some sections. The change of style is due to her decision to forgo retaining the visual form of the *khlong saan* style of poetry and instead use a free verse format, this being partly a result of the fact that the "Isan language" source version was, atypically, also written in this way. In the Introduction some

comparison of the Phra Ariyanuwat version is made with other existing versions of the tale in the modern Thai and Lao scripts. Unfortunately Wajuppa was unable to locate earlier palm-leaf manuscripts that are supposed to exist and so there is no consideration of these in the commentary.

This publication is a worthwhile addition to the field of Isan and Lao studies. It will also be welcomed by those examining issues dealing with fertility rites and rain-calling rituals as well as those interested in comparative folklore and literature. *Phya Khanḵhaak* is a logical progression from the translator's first work. The book concentrates on themes that typify the Isan region and helps us make inroads on understanding the literature and beliefs of this fascinating region of Thailand.

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INDIA

BANSAT-BOUDON, LYNE. *Poétique du théâtre Indien: Lectures du Nāṭyaśāstra*. Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, volume 169. Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1993. 519 pages. Plates, tables, figures, indices. Paper, n.p.; ISBN 2-85539-769-3. (In French)

So far, studies of Sanskrit drama have concentrated more on the texts of the plays than on aspects of their performance. Bansat-Boudon intends to remedy this situation by presenting a detailed study of the performance of a short "play within a play," found in *Mālavikāgnimitra* by Kālidāsa (fifth century A.D.). The play within the play is performed before the king, who is thus allowed an undisturbed view of the actress who had earlier caught his fancy but was kept from him by his first wife, the queen. The performance is to settle a quarrel between the two drama teachers living at the court about who is the better instructor. However, in the play itself the contest is broken off after the performance by only one of the two parties.

The material investigated is inevitably of a purely textual nature. It consists of the text of a verse sung and acted by the actress, and a set of terms used by the teacher that refers to parts of the curriculum of his instruction; another set of terms is found in the judgement of the performance delivered by a learned Buddhist nun. All this should, however, give us a more exact idea of what was important in an actual performance. Our oldest source on Sanskrit drama, Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, typically does not enlighten us in this matter.

Bansat-Boudon starts with a study of the contents of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, since the protago-