

I believe, the key to understanding the Chinese and their culture. Liu's book provides a good example of such an approach.

REFERENCES CITED

KUBO Tadanori 窪 徳忠

1983 *Dōkyō nyūmon* 道教入門. Tokyo: Nantō Shobō.

SASAKI Kōkan 佐々木 宏幹

1986 "*Shinkuretizumu*" *no gainen to mondaiten* 「シンクレティズム」の概念と問題点. Bunka jinruigaku 文化人類学 3. Kyoto: Akademia Shuppankai.

IGARASHI Masako

Little World Museum of Man

Inuyama City, Japan

VIETNAM

NGUYEN DINH THAM. *Studies on Vietnamese Language and Literature: A Preliminary Bibliography*. Southeast Asia Program Series 10. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992. 228 pages. Paper US\$15.00; ISBN 0-87727-127-5.

During the Vietnam War, tens of millions of dollars were spent by the U.S. government on surveys, interviews, field studies, and documentary translations, all designed to inform the higher government echelons about the Vietnamese enemy and the immediate sociopolitical context in which the conflict was being waged. Officials who allocated such monies did not consider the study of Vietnam's language and literature relevant to achieving victory. Inside American universities, meanwhile, several hundred Ph.D. dissertations about Vietnam were produced in the disciplines of political science, history, and applied education, yet only a handful were written in the fields of linguistics and literature. Following the end of the war in 1975, U.S. government funds for studying anything about Vietnam dried up completely; this was mirrored in the universities, where no more than five or six acknowledged specialists managed to hang on to academic positions, and a whole generation of graduate students avoided Vietnam like the plague.

From about 1988 interest in Vietnam began to revive in the United States, although still focusing on the American experience in the war. By 1992 Vietnam had almost become the flavor-of-the-month, with economists, development studies experts, commercial lawyers, and management specialists enjoying the highest profiles. Many of these American academics were retreads from China studies, but by 1995 the background profile was more diverse, and other disciplines were represented, notably anthropology, history, archaeology, and demography. Even linguistics and literature gained a foothold.

Studies on Vietnamese Language and Literature appears to be the fruit of one Vietnamese migrant laboring assiduously in Montreal since 1975, launching bibliographical sorties on major library collections, compiling a personal card file, and eventually gaining the attention of established scholars at the Cornell Southeast Asia Program. We cannot be sure, since the compiler, Nguyen Dinh Tham, provides no background to his project. It would have been nice if Mr. Tham had included a brief introduction to his bibliography telling us, for example, how and where the data was collected, specifying his criteria for including or excluding items, explaining how he delineates "literature" from "folk literature," and maybe even offering readers a few pages on how Western interest in Vietnamese language and literature began and was sustained in the more than three centuries since Fr. Alexandre de Rhodes published his Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin dictionary in Rome (entry 138).

Whatever its genesis, *Studies on Vietnamese Language and Literature* is a valuable biblio-

graphical tool for any researcher who wishes to dig deeper into the Vietnamese experience than the economic forecasts, statistical surveys, and consultant reports that dominate the output today. The volume contains approximately 2,500 entries divided into four sections: Vietnamese language (29% of entries), Vietnamese literature (37%), Vietnamese folk literature (16%), and "V. N. ethnic minorities languages and literatures" (18%). No Vietnamese-language publications are admitted to this bibliography, a restriction that should have been made clear in the book's title. The closest one gets to Vietnamese is the seventy bilingual dictionaries (including rare Pali-Vietnamese, Polish-Vietnamese, and Vietnamese-Lao publications) and the seventy or so Western textbooks for learning Vietnamese. Perhaps Tham plans a second bibliography devoted entirely to relevant Vietnamese publications.

Among the Western languages represented in this bibliography, French occupies the pride of place with at least 45% of the total entries, spread evenly across the subject areas. This reflects the serious commitment of French scholars as well as the capacity of Vietnamese intellectuals to publish in French. It also demonstrates to young graduate students the necessity of accessing French-language materials on topics as diverse as writing systems, historical linguistics, precolonial poetry, twentieth-century fiction, folk narratives, and Tibeto-Burman languages.

English titles make up about 35% of the total entries, being best represented in those parts of the bibliography dealing with Vietnamese language and ethnic minorities, but less evident in the literature and folk literature sections. Russian scholars have made important contributions to research on Vietnamese lexicology, grammar, phonetics, and semantics; curiously, they are almost entirely absent from the study of ethnic minority languages and literature. German, Hungarian, and Polish scholars make cameo appearances in this bibliography. Unfortunately, an extensive corpus of relevant publications in Japanese is ignored completely, and very few Chinese-language titles are included.

Perusing the nineteen-page index of names, one can discover who are the most prolific scholars of Vietnamese language and literature. At the top stands Nguyen Dinh Hoa, with fifty-six entries, including dictionaries, textbooks, linguistics, and folk riddles. Close behind comes Huynh Sanh Thong, with fifty-four entries, followed by David D. Thomas with twenty-five entries. Three French scholars are quite well represented: André Haudricourt (twenty-five entries), George Cordier (twenty-four entries), and Maurice Durand (twenty-one entries).

Nguyen Dinh Tham has managed to uncover some rare books and journals; even those specialists who think they know everything will be in for a few surprises. However, the problem remains of how to track down individual titles. When I tried on my computer to search several library catalogs via Internet, almost none of the "treasure-house" items in the bibliography could be found. It is a pity the compiler did not include venue codes, at least for rare entries.

Annotations to individual works are very sparse, listing, for example, multiple authors contained in an edited volume or indicating where a book was reviewed. More annotation is needed especially with works of fiction, as often the title alone is not very revealing. Also, amidst the hundreds of translations of Vietnamese literature it would have been nice if Tham had signaled for us which renditions are superior, and whether English translations had come via French (which is often the case). One has the impression that the compiler was too modest, anxious not to impose his value judgments on readers.

Although the overwhelming impression when perusing this bibliography is favorable when it comes to general coverage, inevitably a few gaps can be found. In the ethnic minorities section there are no entries for the overseas Chinese (Hoa). The Khmer language is well represented, but nothing is listed for Khmer literature and folklore. The subsection on literature collections in translation contained twenty-nine poetry anthologies and thirty-five fiction anthologies, but not one drama compendium. The compiler seems uncertain about how to deal with nonfiction prose, in the end mostly ignoring it as a literary category. The section "Literary Works about Vietnam by Foreign Authors" opens a Pandora's box when it lists

only about thirty-five titles by American poets and novelists on the Vietnam War.

Nonetheless, *Studies on Vietnamese Language and Literature* is a handy reference tool at a time when academics and students alike are starting to look beyond economic reports. Even economists should take note of the fact that Nguyen Dinh Tham has managed to locate sixty-five studies and translations in ten different languages of the *Tale of Kieu*, an early nineteenth-century epic poem by Nguyen Du that continues to entrance Vietnamese, young and old. This bibliography will be quite helpful not only to Vietnam specialists but to comparative linguists, folklorists, and cultural studies analysts as well. Teachers developing courses on Asian literature in translation will also find many valuable leads.

David G. MARR
Australian National University
Canberra

LAOS

DAMRONG TAYANIN. *Being Kammu: My Village, My Life*. Southeast Asia Program Series 14. Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1994. 138 pages. Photographs, line drawings, tables, bibliography, glossary. Paper US\$14.00; ISBN 0-87727-130-5.

This is the second book by Damrong Tayanin on aspects of his native Kammu culture, following *Hunting and Fishing in a Kammu Village* (1991). (The Kammu [Khmu] are a highland minority group that inhabits the mountainous area of northwestern Laos and the adjacent territories of Thailand and China.) Born in 1938, the author spent the first thirty-five years of his life in upper Laos, mostly in his native village Rmcùal, Namtha Province. Having gained a regional reputation as a Kammu storyteller, he was recruited by Kristina Lindell for a Thailand-based project of the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies. From 1974 onwards research grants have permitted Damrong to live in Sweden and the USA as a co-researcher in various anthropological projects.

Taking advantage of his double qualification as a native Kammu and an experienced anthropological researcher, Damrong is attempting to preserve as much as he can of the traditional culture of his people in written form. As he himself puts it:

I . . . was born and grew up in a Kammu village and I can therefore give an inside picture of it. It is my intention to describe the village and life there as we ourselves see it, and I try to let the readers understand what we ourselves regard as important. (9-10)

The book is neither professional ethnography nor autobiography. It does not provide a systematic and comprehensive description of Kammu culture, and anthropological terminology is largely absent (notable exceptions are the terms *totem* and *shaman*, whose meaning nevertheless remains somewhat vague). Nor does it attempt to give an ordered account of the author's life. It consists rather of Damrong's reminiscences of his youth in Rmcùal; occasional anecdotal narrative adds color to the otherwise neutral and impersonal description. The book resembles an oral account in style; redundancies are frequent, although here this is not a negative factor, since it serves to stress those features of Kammu culture that are salient in the author's view.

The text is divided into four chapters: "The Village and the House," "Village Economy," "Life inside the Village," and "Life outside the Village." This partition reflects the organizing principle of the book: the categories of personal experience of a former village member, not the conventional categories of ethnographic description. There are, for example, no chapters on social structure or religion, as these are merely aspects of everyday life