

150 people. Although the *tulou* is an exceptional case, it still provides an example of a protovillage formed by the extension of a household; it may also be seen as lying between the household and the village community. Village *fengshui* too is most clearly understood if village prosperity is seen to coincide with the good fortune of a particular lineage.

Next let us turn to the question of transition. The most important characteristic of transition in village communities is the movement toward heterogeneity or urbanization. In this process village communities become more than the extensions of households: various surnames are found, and there are many villagers who do not have close kinship ties. The processes of urbanization are manifold, and include population growth, transportation improvements, and shifts in the economic structure (both agricultural and nonagricultural). Much room exists for analyzing these developments in terms of the community's rational use of space. How, for example, does the residents' perception of space change as a result of urbanization? Can we interpret urban development in the premodern period in terms of *fengshui*?

A related issue is the changes that have occurred in settlement patterns since the advent of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. During its forty-five years in power the PRC government has distorted traditional patterns of village life; destroyed many distinctive houses, ancestral halls, and temples; and reorganized the inhabitants in line with their politico-economic policies. Thus in dealing with village communities in the PRC we are faced with the problem of deciding which changes are spontaneous local developments and which are the result of government action. Among the villages studied, Dazhai in Shanxi is the most typical example of a government-produced community; political fever was the motivating principle here, not traditional notions of how people should live. When considering post-1949 patterns of village transition, one probably gets a better idea of the natural course of development by examining communities in Taiwan and Hong Kong. More data on these areas would have been useful.

Chinese Landscapes is important for its treatment of the village as a socio-topological space. However, I would have liked to have had more information on the meanings attributed to particular places by the inhabitants of the community. For example, a restructured ancestral hall may be used for a factory, or a school, or a meeting place. We thus have to ask how the people now view the place: Is it still an ancestral hall in their imaginations, or is it just a factory? Perhaps the older people retain their former image of it while the younger people do not. Only by considering such questions can we come to understand socio-topological space as something defined by the inhabitants and their physical environment, and yet as something shaped also by the imagination of each individual. Socio-topological space is the amalgam of physical presence and imaginative existence; the nature of this amalgam can only be clarified through more interdisciplinary research.

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THAILAND

WALKER, ANTHONY R., editor. *The Highland Heritage: Collected Essays on Upland North Thailand*. Singapore: Suvarnabhumi Books, 1992. xvi + 434 pages. Maps, figures, tables, plates, index. Paper, n.p.; ISBN 981-00-2885-7.

The present collection contains twelve articles on the highland peoples of North Thailand, most of them based on fieldwork carried out in the 1970s. Ten of the pieces originally appeared in *Contributions to Southeast Asian Ethnography* between 1982 and 1988; one of the ten was substantially rewritten for this 1992 publication, while several others underwent

minor revision. There is also a revised version of an article published elsewhere than *Contributions*, and an introductory chapter by the editor (the only piece written specifically for this book). Apart from the introductory article, there are five chapters on the Lahu (four by Anthony Walker, one by Peter Hoare), two on the Akha (one by Katherine Bragg and one by Paul Lewis), one each on the Mlabri (by Jesper Trier), the Yao (by Chob Kachananda), and the Lisu (by Alain Dessaint), and one on the economic and ethnic situation in general (by William and Alain Dessaint). The topics include livelihoods, religious activities, and ethnobotany. The chapters vary in their comprehensiveness: some present detailed texts (like Bragg's list of plants used in Akha ritual and daily life or Walker's ritual texts in the original language with translations), while others are more general accounts (like Dessaint and Dessaint's description of the economic system or Lewis's discussion of traditional culture and beliefs).

Since most of the articles have been in print for quite a while, this review will consider not so much the individual contributions as the overall design and coherence of the publication. Although its abundant ethnographic data should attract anyone interested in the area, I still find it difficult to imagine a specific readership that this collection would satisfy. A general reader would find it haphazard going due to the unevenness of the studies and the large overlaps in information between the chapters that deal with the same ethnic group (this applies especially to the five Lahu chapters, notably chapters 8 and 12, both by Walker). The academic audience too will probably be limited, since so few of the articles have been revised in any substantial way since their original appearance in *Contributions* (an exception is Trier's welcome contribution on the sparsely documented Mlabri, which has been revised to include more recent field data). Presumably the readership will be limited to those with no access to the above journal, those who do but prefer to have the articles together in a single volume, or those who are interested in the one piece that was written specifically for this book. Indeed, Walker's opening chapter, an extensive and comprehensive overview of the various ethnic groups (including those not covered in the chapters to follow, such as the Karen and Hmong), provides a useful guide to the ethnic variety in the area and to the scholarship on the peoples, with a handy twenty-two-page bibliography that includes more recent literature on the topic.

In this introduction, Walker claims that "a close reading of most of the papers presented here should make it abundantly clear that anyone seeking more than a superficial appreciation of the uplanders today must take into consideration their multi-dimensional relationships with the lowlanders, both rural and urban" (1). While I agree wholeheartedly with this assessment of the upland situation, one would need to stare hard between the lines of most of these articles to find such a perspective. Most seem to be basically ethnographic accounts of the traditional culture, society, and beliefs of the X people. This may be a reflection of the approach to ethnography predominant at the time when most of the fieldwork took place, and Walker may have been anticipating criticism along these lines when he wrote in his preface, "Readers are asked to judge all the reprinted chapters with reference to their original dates of publication" (vii).

Detailed ethnographic studies of the cultural and religious traditions of the peoples in the area are undoubtedly important, and reveal to us the rich, varied, and colorful texture of the upland cultures. Yet this approach also lends a sense of permanence and autonomy to these cultures, despite the fact that the people themselves have been forced to reconstitute and reflect upon their traditions by changes in their relationships with surrounding peoples, economies, and cultures. Traditions are not unreflected-upon givens that regulate a people's everyday life. Rather, traditions — and even ethnic identities — are continually reconstructed, given new meaning, and in some cases abandoned as a result of a people's interaction with various other groups, religions, and economies in the changing context of the Northern Thai hills. The dignity of the upland peoples is expressed not only in the distinctiveness and consistency of their traditional culture, but also in their efforts to reformulate this culture while actively dealing with changing circumstances.

The two chapters that are concerned with economic activities (Dessaint and Dessaint, and Hoare) address directly and at length the changes that have been taking place in the hills since the late 1950s. The same chapters also question (as does Walker's chapter on Buddhism among the Lahu) the well-known hills vs. plains dichotomy based on geographical, ecological, cultural, and religious criteria, and take into account the current interethnic relationships in the area. This approach has proved fruitful in recent research, and indeed has become inevitable in the face of the rapid changes taking place in the hills of North Thailand.

That the two chapters which directly address the issue of change are both concerned with economic factors is perhaps understandable in view of the fact that the changes are most readily apparent in economic activity. Yet since traditional life-styles encompass such activity, changes in the economic situation would most certainly be accompanied by changes in the way a people views its tradition. Economic and cultural aspirations cannot be isolated in considering the rapidly changing conditions in the hills. Hoare's chapter is a case in point. If, as Hoare concludes, it is because traditional life-styles are not sufficiently remunerative that the Lahu are approaching lowland life-styles, and not because of any changes in cultural aspiration, why is it that a Northern Thai-style house is becoming a coveted status indicator?

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INDONESIA

STEEDLY, MARY MARGARET. *Hanging without a Rope: Narrative Experience in Colonial and Postcolonial Karoland*. Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, and History. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993. xvi + 306 pages. Illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. Hardcover US\$49.50; ISBN 0-691-09461-6. Paper US\$16.95; ISBN 0-691-00045-X.

Over the past decade, narrative analysis has formed one of the principal currents of the postmodern anthropological approach; through their study of narratives, anthropologists have attempted to explore what classical anthropology either ignored or was unconscious of. In *Hanging without a Rope*, Mary Steedly focuses on narrative experiences in an attempt to elucidate power relationships in colonial and postcolonial Indonesian society.

Following Bakhtin and Bourdieu, Steedly distinguishes between two types of historical representation: official history and unofficial history. She defines official history as "public representations of past experiences" (238) that are monolithically ordered by those who are dominant. Official discourse strengthens the relationship between the dominant and the subordinate; the dominant attempt to regulate activities and events into generic and "socially accepted" representations. Those activities and events that the dominant reject are contained by reducing them to the realm of the "private" and "scandalous." Unofficial history, on the other hand, is a more personal version of past experience, one that is partial and multivocal. It refuses generalization and is potentially subversive to the official order. Official representations are closely related to political authority, while unofficial representations are linked with subaltern experiences.

For the author, narration includes not only the expression of life experience but also the living out of stories. Experiences in narratives, and the narratives themselves, are always shaped through discourse with the audience, narrative convention, and the deformation of the narrative convention. Subjectivity is constructed through narration.

Although the book contains an explicit discussion of narrative theory that cites the