

Asian religion will all find much of value here.

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WIJEYWARDENE, GEHAN and E. C. CHAPMAN, editors. *Patterns and Illusions: Thai History and Thought. In Memory of Richard B. Davis.* Canberra: The Richard Davis Fund and the Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, 1992. 342 pages. Map, figures, line drawings, references, index. ISBN 0-7315-1408-4.

*Patterns and Illusions: Thai History and Thought*, a collection of essays on various aspects of Thai culture, was published in memory of the American anthropologist B. Davis, who died in 1981 at the early age of 38. I was acquainted with Davis when he was a Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand during the late 1960s, and helped him publish his first book, *A Northern Thai Reader* (1970), which has since become a standard work in the field of northern Thai studies. His next book, *Muang Metaphysics: A Study of Northern Thai Myth and Ritual*, published posthumously in 1984, also demonstrates his outstanding scholarship regarding the northern Thai people (cf. *Asian Folklore Studies* 47: 175-77).

The phrase "patterns and illusions" in the title of the present volume alludes to a theme that was of central interest to Davis in his anthropological work. As the editors point out, however, the papers in this collection were not necessarily written with Davis's views in mind. They are grouped into two main sections, the first dealing with the topics of change and development in modern Thailand, and the second with modes of thought.

The first section consists of four papers. The first of these, "Population Movements and Environmental Changes in the Hills of Northern Thailand," by Peter and Sally Kunstader, considers two contrasting ecological adaptations practiced by the hill dwellers of Thailand: the swidden cultivation of the sedentary Lua' and the migratory system of the Hmong and other recent arrivals. The authors then analyze the economic and cultural changes that have accompanied population growth, modernization, and the increased commercialization of land use. (This article was of particular interest to me, as one who has been involved in the effort to help the mountain people—the Aka in particular—preserve their ethnic identities.) The second essay, Paul Cohen's "Irrigation and the Northern Thai State in the Nineteenth Century," examines the relationship between rice paddy agriculture and the political system in nineteenth-century northern Thailand. Cohen concludes that internal characteristics of the local social system caused an increase in demand for surplus rice, a demand answered by the intensified cultivation of royal lands where irrigation was controlled by the state. In "Survivors and Accumulators: Changing Patterns of *pa miang*," Christine Mougne shows how the traditional fermented-tea industry in the northern Thai hills has been affected by changes in taste among the lowland Thais, and how the tea producers have adapted to the new conditions. "Meetings as Ritual: Thai Officials, Western Consultants and Development Planning," by Peter Hinton, discusses the ritualistic nature

of meetings and other activities in the culture of development projects. What the development experts see as "realities" are simply rituals or patterns of illusions, Hinton says, that have no relation to the world in which the peasants live and work.

The second section begins with B. J. Terwiel's "*Laupani* and Ahom Identity: An Ethnohistorical Exerciser," dealing with beer-brewing as a cultural characteristic of the Ahom people that clearly distinguishes them from the surrounding Assamese peoples. The article highlights the necessity for detailed field observation when tracing cultural links between peoples. The next essay, Donald Gibson's "Notes on Traditional Beliefs in Northern Thailand Concerning the Causes of 'Bitot's Spots' (*Xerophthalmia*) and Their Treatment," considers the matter of folk beliefs connected with the eye symptoms that result from severe vitamin A deficiency. "Kinship Extension: Some Modifications in the North Thai Terminology," by Gehan Wijeyewardene, deals with changes in the application of northern Thai kinship terms, while "The 'Extra Y' in Northern Thai Script," by Anthony Diller, discusses the history of Thai writing systems and comments on how political considerations can influence the "construction" of language history.

Ananda Rajah's "Transformations of Karen Myths of Origin and Relations of Power" considers the changes that occurred over time in the origin narratives of the Karen people as they sought to define their identity in a multi-ethnic society. "A Tale of Two City Pillars: Thai Astrology on the Eve of Modernization," by Nerida Cook, considers the significance that King Mongkut's combination of traditional Thai astrology and modern Western astronomy had as part of his drive to modernize the country in the mid-nineteenth century. Craig Reynolds's "The Plot of Thai History: Theory and Practice" discusses the creation of new "plots" for the narrative of Thai history; he sees history, not as a record of what "actually" happened, but as the creation of those who write it. This, he feels, is a positive thing: human beings are thereby restored to "their role as makers of meaning," and history is no longer seen as simply the result of an inexorable process. Reynolds's discussion brought to mind the words of Oscar Wilde, who said, "The ancient historian gave us delightful fiction in the form of fact; the modern novelist presents us with dull facts under the guise of fiction" (ELLMAN 1988, 106).

The papers in this volume present a wide range of research on subjects relating to the "patterns and illusions" of Thailand. The scholars represented are all serious social scientists, and have contributed much in the present collection to the understanding of the Thai nation today. As a Thai I feel grateful to them all—the book is a fitting memorial to Richard Davis.

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