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A Sarong for Clio: Essays on the Intellectual and Cultural History of Thailand, Inspired by Craig J. Reynolds. Edited by Maurizio Peleggi. Ithaca, New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2015. vi+208 pp.

The serious student of Thai history will do well to read *A Sarong for Clio* from cover to cover, rather than dipping selectively into the nine essays and an introduction that it brings together. For it is — despite its title and the uneven quality of its constituent chapters — a volume meriting careful consideration for what it indicates about the state of and prospects for historical scholarship on Thailand. In that sense the book represents an admirable and entirely fitting *Festschrift* for Craig Reynolds.

The approach of this review is to take the contributions to this book on their own terms, rather than systematically to consider the specific ways in which each of those contributions is or is not in dialogue with Reynolds’s work. The latter exercise is far beyond the scope of this review, and perhaps also beyond the competence of this reviewer. The review approaches *A Sarong for Clio* as a conclave of scholars who share Reynolds’s seriousness about the study of Thailand at a time when trends both in the country and in academic life put that study at risk of trivialization and superficiality.

Editor Maurizio Peleggi’s brief, not uncritical, introduction to the volume explores Reynolds’s early work with intelligence and perceptiveness; its treatment of later stages in Reynolds’s work is less thoughtful. Further, while Peleggi finds time for a rather cliché swipe at the “typical 1950s American diet” (p. 12), his discussion of American “neocolonial scholarship” (p. 5) on Thailand during the Cold War and of Reynolds’s transition away from participation in such scholarship feels truncated. His introduction notes Oliver Wolters’s success in giving Reynolds “a taste for cross-disciplinary inquiry and conceptual sophistication” (p. 5) during the course of Reynolds’s studies at Cornell, and it alludes to the prominence of Wolters’s work on Reynolds’s syllabi at the Australian National

University in the early 1990s. But it eschews more specific treatment of the two men's influence on one another during the period in which each increasingly incorporated approaches drawn from literary theory into his work. In contrast, Peleggi does touch, briefly, on Reynolds's interest in Thai and Thai-Chinese identities and in globalization, "the other side of the coin of national identity" (p. 9), during the middle phase of his career. An emphasis on Thai identities also stands at the centre of Federico Ferrara's recent book on Thailand's "political development" (Ferrara 2015). As scholars set out further to explore and to build on that monumental volume, this section of Peleggi's introduction to *A Sarong for Clio* serves as a useful reminder to revisit Reynolds's work from the 1990s.

In turning to the tensions and divisions that have characterized Thai political life during the past decade, Peleggi's introduction calls out, without naming names, "some (regrettable) intellectual posturing" on the part of "some in Thai Studies" (p. 10). Peleggi notes Reynolds's focus during most of the past two decades on "a long-term analysis of Thai intellectuals as the *trait d'union* between civil society and the body politic" (ibid.) rather than on Thailand's long and ongoing crisis. But his summary treatment of the issues at stake in that crisis makes no reference to the value of a body of historical scholarship as large and diverse as Reynolds's as a source of perspective. This lapse is mystifying, not least for what it suggests about the role of the historian. One wonders whether Peleggi has concluded that history may not be a source of useful perspective on Thailand in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Whatever the case, several of the subsequent chapters in this volume — including, one must note, Peleggi's own — challenge such a conclusion.

Peleggi has organized the nine chapters that follow his introduction into two sections. One section, on "Historiography, Knowledge, and Power", includes contributions from Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, Thongchai Winichakul, Tamara Loos and Peleggi himself. Essays from Patrick Jory, James Ockey, Nishizaki Yoshinori, Villa Vilaithong and Kasian Tejapira appear in the other section,

entitled “Political and Business Culture” but not unified by any clear understanding of what is meant by “culture”. For the purposes of this review, it makes sense to divide the chapters in another way — into one group of five that are particularly well realized and likely to have lasting value and a second group of four essays that are, while in some cases genuinely stimulating, for various reasons less satisfactory.

Even among the chapters in that former group, Villa Vilaithong’s striking and original chapter on the defunct Thai business monthly *Khu khaeng* stands out. In his classic forty-year-old article on the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Thai intellectual Ko. So. Ro. Kulap, Reynolds notes that Kulap criticized “the European handkerchiefs, Egyptian cigarettes, Swedish matches, and imported whisky in which faddish residents of Bangkok indulged” during his time (Reynolds 1973, p. 87). Consciously or not, Villa Vilaithong builds on that observation — with its attention to patterns of consumption — from her teacher’s early work. She situates the launch of *Khu khaeng* in 1980 not only with respect to constraints on political journalism in Thailand in the period after October 1976 and the growing place of manufacturing in the Thai economy even in the pre-boom era but also with respect to the rise of market research in Thailand. In stressing the magazine’s focus on markets and marketing, Villa makes two valuable contributions. First, she captures the business environment in Thailand on the eve of the breakneck economic growth that began in the mid-1980s. Understanding of that growth and of the trajectory that it followed has too seldom benefitted from awareness of the specific domestic conditions in which it arose; this magnificent chapter ought to direct historians’ attention to those conditions. Second, her success in making vivid patterns of aspiration, consumption and social differentiation during the 1980s puts into much needed perspective those same phenomena as they characterize the divided Thailand of today. Villa’s chapter is a tour de force.

Thongchai also builds, in this case explicitly, on Reynolds’s work on Ko. So. Ro. Kulap (Reynolds 1973) in his own chapter, which

revisits the question of the animosity that Kulap's historical writing earned him at the Siamese court. While acknowledging the importance of Kulap's commoner status in explaining that animosity, Thongchai also draws on the work of Nidhi Eowseewong (2005) to argue that Kulap and his princely antagonists found themselves on opposite sides of a clash between "two different historiographic modes" (p. 54). At a time of "epistemic transition" that saw the Siamese elite embrace "modern" (p. 61) practices of history that emphasized (what that elite considered) facts and evidence, its members lashed out at Kulap for his continued adherence to an historiography marked by lifting material from extant texts, by embellishment and by invention. Of course, Kulap's royal enemies, Prince Damrong Rachanuphap chief among them, used that new mode of history writing above all to articulate the royalist national history that still casts such a long shadow over Thailand. The stakes in their rejection of Kulap and his attachment to an older mode were not merely intellectual.

Thongchai's chapter includes a brilliant interpretation of Ko. So. Ro. Kulap's 1906 allegory of two fictitious Sukhothai kings, Pinket and Chunlapinket. He observes that Kulap told their story just as the Sukhothai kingdom was leaving the realm of folklore and legend to become a chapter in "the official narrative of Siam's history" (p. 59). Rather than seeking to falsify the history of that kingdom, then, Kulap sought to use that kingdom as a still legendary, "once upon a time", setting to comment allegorically on the events of his own time.

Maurizio Peleggi's gracefully written chapter underlines Thongchai's point about the integration of Sukhothai into the history of the nation. It traces with great learning the development and elaboration of the idea that Buddha images dating to "the Sukhothai period" of Thailand's putative national history during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries represented the pinnacle of the nation's artistic achievement. Peleggi has in recent years emerged as a pioneer in what he calls "the historiography of Thai art history" (p. 92). In his study of the roles not only of Damrong but also of George Coëdès, Reginald LeMay, Corrado Feroci, A.B. Griswold and even

UNESCO in enshrining, “as artistic masterpieces, the androgynous Sukhothai-style Buddhas” (p. 93), he reveals a neglected dimension of the still influential if increasingly threadbare Thai nationalist project.

Equally learned is Chris Baker’s and Pasuk Phongpaichit’s contribution on representations of power in the tale of *Khun Chang Khun Phaen*. Preparation of their vaunted translation into English of this long Thai epic (Baker and Pasuk 2010) has left these scholars with a mastery of its endless, complex, episodes that is on full display in their chapter. Honouring Reynolds’s own interest in the place of manuals in the formation and transmission of Thai worldviews, they read a number of these episodes for what they reveal about authority and mastery as two forms of power. If the power of the Ayutthayan king in *Khun Chang Khun Phaen* represents the former form, that of the Woltersian man of prowess Khun Phaen embodies the latter. Baker and Pasuk offer an interpretation of *Khun Chang Khun Phaen*, one of those “[b]ig tales that loom large in popular culture” (p. 37), as a sustained argument for balance or even interdependence between these two forms of power. More than any other in the book, this chapter links, if only implicitly, Thailand’s intellectual and cultural history to that of Southeast Asia more broadly, at least as scholars first approached that history a generation or two ago (see, for example, Anderson 1972). Just as we in the Thailand field had to wait far too long for scholars with the formidable talent and intellectual range of Baker and Pasuk to make *Khun Chang Khun Phaen* the object of serious historical study, so the success of their essay raises questions about why such linkages between the study of Thailand and that of the rest of the region remain relatively few.

Patrick Jory’s thoughtful chapter, on “Republicanism in Thai History”, draws with his typical skill on the work of a range of Thai historians to argue for the existence of a “century-old tradition” (p. 117) of “desire to limit monarchical rule” (p. 98). Citing Nakharin Mektrairat (2010), he notes that, *contra* glosses prevailing today, the meaning of “*prachathipatai*” that obtained at the end of Siam’s absolute monarchy in 1932 was in fact “republic” rather than “democracy”. That former meaning of the term makes it an antonym of the “*prachathipatai an mi phramahakasat songpen pramuk*”

(democracy with the king as head of state) that Thai royalists have long tried to make pass for “constitutional democracy” (p. 17). Jory traces the lineage of Thai republicanism, broadly understood, from the reign of Chulalongkorn (1868–1910), through the “liberal republicanism” of the 1930s and 1940s (p. 111) and the rise in the 1950s of Marxist analyses of Thai politics and society to the sentiments of “popular republicanism” (p. 116) that intensifying use of the law against *lèse majesté* in recent years has sought to suppress. His fine chapter suggests that we do well to understand the “ideological hegemony” (p. 115) achieved by Thai monarchism from the 1980s onward as something exceptional rather than something natural or durable. If one had any quibble with Jory’s contribution to this book, it would concern his failure to explore the implications of the aborted political project of Field Marshal Po. Phibunsongkhram during the late 1930s and 1940s for a Thailand free of royal interference in the affairs of state.

To turn to the first of the other four chapters in this volume, Tamara Loos offers a teaser for her forthcoming monograph on a Thai prince, Pritsadang Chumsai (พระวรวงศ์เธอ พระองค์เจ้าปฤษฎางค์, 1852–1935), who incurred the wrath of King Chulalongkorn, left Siam and later wrote an autobiography intended, apparently, to set the record straight. Loos seeks to use her study of the prince to “open a window onto the larger constraints of Thai culture and history” (p. 64), but it is difficult to understand where “culture” comes into the picture. Surely the prince’s story relates at least as much to personal dynamics between and among Chulalongkorn and members of the extended royal family during the period in which the former and a tight group of princes sought to build a modern state for Siam as it does to “culture”. This chapter neglects those dynamics, though it does suggest Loos’s interest in the norms that obtained in the sliver of Siamese society in which a Chakri prince lived during the reign of King Chulalongkorn.

Loos’s principal goal in the study of this prince is to bring the “emotive dimension of human life” (p. 64) to the study of Thai history. Frustratingly, however, she defers full consideration of the reasons for Pritsadang’s apparently wrenching and traumatic decision to leave

the country pending the completion of her monograph. Nevertheless, her chapter grows considerably in interest in its second half. With great erudition, Loos there engages with the topic of autobiography in Thai history. She introduces the concept of “life writing — a category that encompasses diaries, memoirs, letters, autobiographies, and other forms of writing that involve the construction of self and the narration of an individual life” (p. 71). The value of this concept in prodding historians of Thailand to draw on wider ranges of materials in their work is beyond question. Loos ends her chapter with a rather forced analogy between Pritsadang’s story and “the outrageous politics of *lèse majesté* that rankles Thailand’s democracy in the twenty-first century” (p. 77).

An awkward culturalism also figures in Ockey’s contribution, a study of the career of the long-time member of parliament for Nakhon Si Thammarat Cham Chamratnet (ฉ่ำ จรรย์สเนตร, 1898–1978). A talented but thoroughly eccentric and mischievous politician, Cham behaved in ways that earned him a reputation for madness. Ultimately imprisoned by the regime of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat after he criticized the dictator in a meeting with the dictator’s protégé King Phumiphon Adunyadet when the latter visited Nakhon, Cham refused to enter a plea of insanity. Ockey draws on his case to argue that Cham’s long history of political stunts, as he sought to challenge authoritarian regimes, recalls the popular Thai theatrical forms of *like* and *manora*. Ockey further suggests that the Sarit regime deployed psychiatry to discredit opponents like Cham through charges of insanity. But this chapter links Cham to those theatrical forms in only the most speculative way, and its consideration of the role of psychiatry during the Sarit era comes only in the final paragraph of the chapter. The real value of this chapter lies in Ockey’s unmatched excavation and vivid description of episodes and norms in the life of Thailand’s parliament in the period from the late 1930s through the 1950s, decades that represent the neglected but crucial prehistory of the Thai parliamentary democracy of the period since 1980.

As is his wont, Nishizaki also brings vividness, along with polish, to his contribution to this volume. That contribution centres

on a 1999 ceremony to inaugurate a “musical fountain” (p. 152) on the grounds of the absurd 120-metres-tall observation tower that former prime minister Banhan Sinlapa-acha had between 1994 and 1997 employed government funds to construct in the Central Thai provincial centre of Suphanburi. Nishizaki uses his account of this ceremony to offer a variation on an argument about “social identity” (p. 160), perceptions of status and provincial politics that he has made for a number of years in a string of outstanding publications (see, most notably, Nishizaki 2011). He originally developed this argument to counter the sweeping and never entirely plausible accounts of provincial politics in the Thailand of the 1980s and 1990s that centred on corrupt “*chao pho*” or “godfather” figures who allegedly preyed on “submissive, venal, and timid” (p. 146) yokels in the rural electorate. Today, the argument has a decidedly dated feel. Few students of Thai politics would now question Nishizaki’s point or deny that it applies not just to a single province of Thailand but to whole regions of the country, and to what may well be the majority of Thais who have “found their voice” (Keyes 2014). In focusing on identity as a factor in Thai politics, Nishizaki may well have been ahead of his time (see Ferrara 2015, pp. 252, 273–75). However, his chapter in this volume is fighting yesterday’s academic battles.

One cannot make the same criticism of Kasian’s chapter, the last in the book. Building in his inimitable way both on Reynolds’s work on Chit Phumisak (Reynolds 1987) and on Prince Wan Waithayakon’s ideas about the localization of foreign ideas through the development of Thai-language terms for them, Kasian traces the discourse of “governance” in Thailand since the crude attempts of the International Monetary Fund to impose one-size-fits-all liberalization on the country in the wake of the financial crisis of 1997. His use of Prince Wan in particular serves to ground his approach to “cultural politics” (p. 182) in a more convincing, less heavy-handed way than other contributors to this volume. Kasian examines the appropriation of Chaiwat Satha-anand’s coinage “*thammarat*, or Thai-style good governance” (p. 185) by a range of interests, each with its own

goals and vision. He introduces subsequent retranslations of “good governance” as “*thammaphiban*” (“the fostering and maintenance of *thamma*”; p. 189) and as “*kanborihan kitchakan banmueang thi di*” (“good administration of public affairs”; *ibid.*). Ultimately, he concludes, the pretext of fighting against corruption and for “clean politics” has served to turn “good governance” into a “national discursive saboteur” (p. 913), a pretext for the imposition of a “reactionary, undemocratic, and unconstitutional” (*ibid.*) order on the country. Deeply original, deeply convincing and studded with a wealth of invaluable material in its footnotes, this chapter is also brief and fragmentary; it thus fails to do full justice to its subject.

Kasian’s contribution to *A Sarong for Clio* does, with its opening discussion of the ideas of Naomi Klein and Milton Friedman, suggest the relevance of its close scrutiny of the Thai case to the concerns of scholars whose principal intellectual interests do not lie in the study of Thailand. Similarly, Thongchai’s chapter highlights a dynamic that such scholars would certainly do well to investigate in other contexts, as has been the case with his earlier work (for example, Thongchai 1994). Other contributions to the volume — above all those of Peleggi and Loos — draw with unquestioned effectiveness on the work of scholars unconcerned with Thailand. At the same time, the chapters in this book are, taken as a group and depending on one’s disposition, either extremely focused or quite narrow, even parochial. The ultimate test of the volume’s importance will, then, lie in the degree to which it impels historians of Thailand to take stock of their field, and to reconsider the nature of its relationship both to Southeast Asian and other history, and to what matters in the Thai past itself, as they seek to build on the legacy of forebears like Craig Reynolds.

Sadly, Cornell Southeast Asia Program (SEAP) Publications has not served either the editor or the contributors to *A Sarong for Clio* well. The volume has no bibliography or index. Its text suffers from missing words as well as missing, inconsistent and incorrect punctuation. The first page of text in the book seems to follow a style sheet prepared by the United States Postal Service (“Ithaca, NY”; p. 1). Footnotes cite “Bass Terwiel” (p. 49, note 25) and

“Anna Lowen Haupt Tsing” (p. 186, note 24). The reader encounters abominations like “*véritable sauvages*” (p. 86) and “real politik” (p. 67), as well as “gentile” where “genteel” is meant and “brokered” where “brooked” is meant (both on p. 76).

It is also, for a reader who has for decades learned so much about the region from SEAP books, a source of genuine distress to discover a number of editorial lapses reflecting apparent unfamiliarity with Thailand and the study of Thailand. Page 176, for example, gets the English-language names of two Thai banks wrong. One chapter offers three different romanizations, each implausible or even nonsensical, for “ก้านแพงเพชร”: “Khamphaengphet” (p. 80), “Khamphaeng Phet” (p. 90) and “Kamphraeng Phet” (p. 93). Another chapter refers to “Luang Thawin Thamrongnawasawat” (p. 121) and “*Luang Thawin Thamrongnawasawat*” (p. 124). This Thai prime minister went by a series of different names at various stages of his life: Thawan Tharisawat (ถวัลย์ ธารีสวัสดิ์), *Luang Thamrongnawasat* (หลวง ธารังนาวาสวัสดิ์) and Rear Admiral Thawan Thamrongnawasawat (พล.ร.ต.ถวัลย์ ธารังนาวาสวัสดิ์). But neither the name given in the text nor, it would seem, even the form of that name appear to have been one of them. The crucial point here is that the evolution in the names used by the man best remembered as *Luang Thamrong* tracked developments in Thailand’s social and political history. A publisher with expertise on the region ought to be aware of matters like this one.

The romanization of Thai terms that are not proper names is also an issue in the book; it does not follow a consistent standard among chapters, or even within chapters. For example, “เมือง” is rendered as “*mueang*” in some places in some chapters (p. 57; p. 31, note 20; p. 114, note 77; p. 188, note 33) and as “*muang*” elsewhere in one of those same chapters (p. 45, note 13; p. 48, note 23) and in still another chapter (pp. 150, 153). The case of “เมือง” is just one example among many of the unsystematic and sometimes simply erroneous (see “*nakhleng*” on page 11, for example) approach to the romanization of Thai terms other than proper names taken in the preparation of this volume. Unfortunately, this approach appears to reflect a broader, more fundamental lack of understanding of the issues involved in editing and publishing scholarship on Thailand.

Lapses like these undermine both the project that the book under review would advance and the reputation of SEAP Publications.

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Brunei: From the Age of Commerce to the 21st Century. By Marie-Sybille de Vienne. Singapore: NUS Press, 2015. xviii+331 pp.

There are not many comprehensive monographs on the subject of Brunei. It is a small country that tends not to capture the spotlight