

(terms that it uses largely interchangeably) on the one hand and the broader study of what the introduction calls “resource-use regimes” (p. 12) on the other. Several chapters deal with natural resources mainly through a focus on property, access, land use and territory rather than engaging more directly with the question of the management of potentially degradable resources. At times, then, the book loses its analytical focus on conservation. In some ways, the volume is perhaps understood better as being about resource use and agrarian political economy in upland Indonesia and Malaysia than specifically about conservation. These caveats, however, take nothing away from the many accomplishments of *Beyond the Sacred Forest*.

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Monks and Magic: Revisiting a Classic Study of Religious Ceremonies in Thailand (NIAS Classics series, no. 2). By Barend Jan Terwiel. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2012. 312 pp.

Monks and Magic, the classic account of Buddhism in rural Central Thailand that was first published in 1975, has been reprinted with a new preface and postscript and with additions to the text. The book is organized around the ways in which engagement with Buddhism develops through the life-course of villagers. The author’s own engagement with the monastic and lay communities gives the work a notable depth in the ethnography of ritual and meaning. This remains an important but controversial book: important for the beautiful, detailed ethnographic account of ritual and belief in a village community that it provides, and controversial for the unbridgeable separation that, the author maintains, exists between “village” and “elite” Buddhism.

Terwiel begins by considering the introduction of Buddhism to Thailand with an account of the history of the region, religion and ritual in his first chapter. He suggests that adherence to Buddhist orthodoxy has never been a necessary aspect of engagement with Buddhism for the majority of Thais. In the following chapters he provides detailed ethnography in support of his argument that Buddhist concepts are reinterpreted in a “magico-animist mould” (p. 20) in the village in which he worked. Chapter Two provides an introduction to the monastery, the village and the surrounding area. Terwiel spent the first six months of his fieldwork ordained as a monk in the village monastery and another five months living with the family of his ordination sponsor. Chapter Three explores the beliefs and practices surrounding conception and birth, providing rich ethnographic detail on the rituals of childbirth, the protection of the new mothers and naming ceremonies. Chapter Four continues the consideration of youths as they move into adolescence, providing detailed information about the engagement of young men and women with forms of protection and religious belief.

Chapter Five considers in remarkably rich ethnographic detail the first period of ordination into the Sangha for young men as a *rite de passage*. Chapter Six focuses on courtship and marriage, and usefully explores sangha involvement in rituals around marriage and procreation. Chapter Seven locates engagement with Buddhist ritual during house building as a form of practical knowledge that facilitates avoidance of inauspicious times and materials. Chapter Eight examines religious precepts in detail. Chapter Nine focuses primarily on the link between karma and financial outlay. Terwiel argues that farmers believe that reciting Pali formulae will have a generally beneficial impact. Chapter Ten focuses on old age, death and the hereafter. Terwiel draws a distinction between escaping rebirth and being reborn in better circumstances and argues that villagers are focused exclusively on the latter. He examines the relationship between the living and the dead and the duty that the living owe to the dead. Throughout, Terwiel pays particular attention to the differences between men and women, taking into account differing

access to education and religious knowledge. He argues that women are in ritual opposition to men until they pass childbearing age.

Terwiel intended his work to illustrate the distinction between two approaches to Buddhism in Thailand, which he identified as “rural, unsophisticated Buddhism” and the “Buddhist religion of the highly educated classes” (p. 1). In so doing, he made an important contribution to a hot debate in the scholarship of the time. He sought to resolve a dialectic in scholarly characterizations of Thai Buddhism as either syncretic — “a harmonious blend of Buddhism and local creeds” — or as comprised of distinct “strata in the religion” (p. 1). Disagreement about the character of Thai Buddhism arose, he argued, as a result of conflating two distinct “types of Buddhism” and of drawing conclusions from either “the untutored population” or the “statements of the educated classes” (p. 3). He makes this point clearly when he writes, “The religion of the farmer is basically magico-animistic, whilst those among the elite who adhere to religion may be regarded as having organized an intellectual appreciation of Buddhism” (p. 4).

Terwiel returns to the distinction between elitist and magico-animistic interpretations of Buddhism in the conclusion of *Monks and Magic*. He argues that, in the village, progress in life moves “from a preoccupation with magical power to a concentration of the long-term effects of merit” (p. 267). While he recognizes the limits of his own model, he argues that “[t]he model that recognizes animistic Buddhism as well as a compartmentalized religion with a Buddhist superstructure has the advantage of being dynamic” (p. 268). The book’s afterword returns us to the village in 2010, and it is fascinating to see comparative images of the village now and then. This is a stark reminder of the extent to which life in the village has changed. Given village incorporation into the urban sprawl of Ratchaburi — linked through roads, electrical lines and networks of movement whose effects extend into family, marriage and work — one wonders how distinctions between different types of Buddhism are to be maintained, both analytically and ethnographically.

To some extent Terwiel’s work echoes discussion in Thailand about the character of Buddhism. Currently, debate rages in Thailand

about the legitimacy of protective power generated through Buddhist practice. Public intellectuals and reformist Buddhist leaders have argued that magic, protection and merit-seeking are indicative of a crisis in Buddhism. At the same time, however, recent decades have witnessed a dramatic increase in interest in merit-making and protection in Thailand, including intensifying lay interest in charismatic monks and popular spirit-medium cults influenced by mass media and religious commodification. Thai Buddhists are engaging with protective practices in the context of competing and compelling interpretations of what Buddhism might be as instantiated in practice. Clearly, concern over the meaning and practice of Buddhism is an ethnographic concern, even if it may no longer be an appropriate analytic. Nonetheless, *Monks and Magic* remains an impressively detailed ethnographic contribution to the study of Thai Buddhism.

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Chinese Food and Foodways in Southeast Asia and Beyond. Edited by Tan Chee-Beng. Singapore: NUS Press, 2011. 256 pp.

Chinese Food and Foodways in Southeast Asia and Beyond deals with the anthropology of food in Southeast Asia and, in particular, examines how variants of Chinese food are transferred, reproduced and localized by overseas Chinese communities. Almost all of the contributors to the volume are anthropologists. Yet this is hardly a typical ethnographic project. Ethnographies are usually based on the stuff that “makes” anthropology: case studies, detailed descriptions of particular rituals and events, careful analysis of observed practices, and specific observations. The chapters in this book are much broader, based on many years of academic research, and on long-term engagement and personal experience that for most of the contributors go way beyond the academy.