

other genres, including songs for life, made only half-hearted attempts to use *luk thung*. It failed to engage with the working and peasant classes and thus found it difficult to appeal to Thaksin's Isan partisans. The junta that took power in the most recent military coup, in 2014, has brutally repressed both political activity and dissent, including all oppositional music and culture. *Luk thung* has become a mainly commercialized pop music. Mitchell concludes that *luk thung* reflects "the collision between globalization and localization ... [and] provides a snapshot of non-elite Thai society adapting to the modern mediated world" (p. 177).

Given the use of music over the years to mobilize support for political campaigns and social movements in countries like Jamaica, Chile, Indonesia and the Philippines, the book might have benefitted from a comparative perspective. Helpful appendices identify artists and the music's chronology, but a glossary of the many Thai terms used in the book would have been useful. In overall terms, this is a fine study, by a passionate fan, of a neglected subject.

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Living Buddhism: Mind, Self, and Emotion in a Thai Community. By Julia Cassaniti. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015. xiv+213 pp.

Over a period of about ten years, the American anthropologist Julia Cassaniti visited and revisited two families in the northernmost part of Thailand. Her interactions began with Goy and Gaew, two shop-owning women, and, over time, extended to their relatives.

In the first chapters of the resultant book, the author recalls a number of remarks that her informants made after they had experienced a traumatic event, such as the demise of a member of the family. She noted a remarkable equanimity. "Letting go"

and “impermanence” thus became the key concepts that helped her understand why her informants behaved and spoke as they did. Not surprisingly, she links their fatalistic statements with the fact that they are Buddhists, who learn that all things are *anicca*, impermanent.

Cassaniti brings two novel factors into the analysis. In the first place she points out an expression that several of her informants used when they had to overcome a stressful situation. This she calls “making the heart”. This is clearly a word-for-word translation of the Thai expression ทำใจ (in Cassaniti’s transliteration: *tham jai*). Word-for-word translations are dangerous and can lead to confusion, and indeed Cassaniti made an unfortunate choice by opting for “making the heart”. The Thai words form a simple idiomatic expression. It is indeed used after something unfortunate has happened. It indicates that the situation has to be accepted, albeit reluctantly. A sentence like “kho wela tham jai” (ขอเวลาทำใจ) means: “give me time to adjust to this”. Cassaniti would perhaps translate it as “I ask for time to make the heart”. “Making the heart” is a translation that does not do justice to the Thai language.

The second novel idea is that Cassaniti made contact with a Christian Karen family in a village in the neighbourhood of her research site. There she led the conversations in the direction of how the family would cope with death and disease. On the basis of these conversations, she makes a comparison between Buddhist principles and the teachings of a Christian church. The outcome of this experiment is predictable: the Christian informants choose quite different strategies to handle misfortune.

A major part of this book is devoted to the case of Sen, a thirty-two-year-old member of one of “her” families, a male who apparently suffers from deep depression and who has become an alcoholic. All of Cassaniti’s attempts to persuade his relatives to do something about this sad case, to intervene and to cure the sick man meet with resistance from the family. They refuse to take drastic steps to cure him; nobody is willing to call in a psychiatrist, and nobody even contemplates discussing the patient’s condition with

him. Cassaniti is clearly frustrated that the depressed man is left to his own devices.

Those familiar with Thai culture will not be altogether surprised at her informants' unwillingness to act. It is an axiom in Thai Buddhism that every individual, even at an early age, is ultimately responsible for what happens to him- or herself. The fact that Sen drinks every day until he is in a stupor proves to his surroundings that he acquired much demerit in previous existences.

A minor irritant is that when Cassaniti adds Thai expressions to her text in brackets, no doubt in order to add a touch of authenticity, she does not present the words according to one of the established systems of transliteration. Thus we read *watanatam* (p. 16), *bhatibat tham* (p. 57), and *nuum* (p. 89). In one instance, the Thai words are misplaced: "I agreed that it was gone (*yom rap*)" (p. 90). The words *yom rap* should have come directly after "agreed".

The statement that the Buddhist concept *puñña* (merit) could be related to the Sanskrit *puja* (to worship) is also surprising (p. 14). It is intriguing to read near the end of the book that some of her informants adhere to a Thai-Japanese form of Buddhism called *yo reh* (pp. 140–43). Is this an abbreviated form of the Soka Gakkai's "*nam myoho rengo kyo*"? She does not explain.

This book reveals both the strength and the weakness of the anthropological method of participant observation. Cassaniti's sample of a dozen Thais seems too small to formulate generalizations such as "Contrary to my expectations, I found no marked gender differences in the kinds of emotions that people reported having or being expected to have ... [T]here was not a fixed and gendered double standard of emotionality" (p. 108).

As participant observer she shares with us her impressions of various Buddhist rituals, such as making sand pagodas, changing names and making merit. Her findings on matrilinearity and women's decision-making in the northern part of Thailand confirm what Sulamith Heins Potter wrote in her classic *Family Life in a Northern Thai Village* (1977).

REFERENCE

Potter, Sulamith Heins. *Family Life in a Northern Thai Village: A Study in the Structural Significance of Women*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

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Beyond Borders: Stories of Yunnanese Chinese Migrants of Burma. By Wen-Chin Chang. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014. 296 pp.

Studies of borderlands have, in recent decades, de-centred our understanding of a world dominated by nation-states. They highlight the flows of people, capital, commodities, information and ideas in spaces that may be off the beaten path, but not necessarily peripheral to the political and economic life of countries. Through oral history accounts and ethnographic snippets collected over the course of more than a decade, from the 1990s to the late 2000s, *Beyond Borders* presents Yunnanese Chinese as mobile subjects that are integral to the economic dynamism of a Burma or Myanmar that has been isolated for decades. It offers a rare glimpse into the border regions of Yunnan, Burma and Thailand, where smuggling and political insurgency have been part of everyday life for decades, and it traces the lives of Yunnanese subjects that stretch from these border regions to Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Taiwan.

The book is divided into two parts, dealing with migratory history and transnational trade respectively. By applying a personal narrative approach, the author seeks to outline the contours of these themes through the life stories of key informants. One of them is Zhang Dage (Chapter 1), who was born in the restive Shan State of Burma into the family of a Kuomintang (KMT) soldier who had retreated from Communist China. Zhang Dage completed his junior high school education in Northern Thailand, went to medical college and became a physician in Taiwan, where he settled down and had a family. This