

as a summary of previous chapters than as an effort to tease out the implications of those chapters' findings. The powerful role of the rapidly growing middle class in shaping Thai society has thus far received insufficient study, and Sophornvaty's book marks an important contribution to our efforts to understand it.

James Ockey

Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand; email: james.ockey@canterbury.ac.nz.

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Heritage and Identity in Contemporary Thailand: Memory, Place and Power. By Ross King. Singapore: NUS Press, 2017. xiii+319 pp.

Heritage and Identity in Contemporary Thailand is a hard book to review, chiefly because of the difficulty in categorizing it. It is not really a monograph, in spite of Ross King's being credited as the sole author. All of the chapters are in fact based on dissertations and writings by Thai scholars who are acknowledged accordingly at the beginning of each chapter. The chapters not only utilize content provided by selected Thai scholars but also offer their perspectives. It is precisely this collaboration that means that the volume is not simply another outside gaze at Thailand through a Western lens. At the same time, the manuscript is not an edited collection, since it represents a single narrative — that of King. He admits at times going beyond the task of editing the contributions to the book to the point of rewriting some parts. Accordingly, King acutely displays his own awareness of the impossibility of categorizing the book.

Certainly the book could be criticised for being neither one thing nor the other — neither a collection of thesis excerpts nor a coherent narrative on the selected theme. It is likely therefore to please no one. The aim, however, is not to please but to provoke, even to confront, thereby to render discourse inescapable. (p. 4)

And the volume has certainly achieved this aim.

The contents of *Heritage and Identity in Contemporary Thailand* are easier to describe than its nature. The volume makes an important contribution to the fields of cultural heritage and Thai studies, and is certain to attract both scholars and interested readers looking for an in-depth analysis of Thailand. The book explores the establishment of the identity of contemporary Thailand, and consequently of the Thais, through heritage. King employs the term “heritage” in its broadest sense to cover both physical and psychological sites. He argues that there is a memory attached to each example of heritage, and it is precisely this memory that plays a part in building Thailand’s identity. Identity is therefore created from the memory attached to a place or site of heritage. Because memory is socially produced, it is inevitably linked to power. Essentially, this book is an adept demonstration of the struggle of powers in Thailand: religious cult, the monarchy, political authorities, and the people. Theirs is a struggle to craft the most foundational element of life, an identity.

The manuscript follows the framework laid down by Pierre Nora’s seminal work *Les lieux de mémoire* (1984, 1986 and 1993), which endeavoured to define the identity of France. It is thus divided into two parts called *Lieux de Mémoire* and *Milieus de Mémoire*. Each part contains six chapters, carefully chosen to reflect the diversity of contemporary Thailand. The first part assembles cases in which memory is officially sanctioned in defining the heritage and identity of the monarchy and the nation. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the elite heritage of ancient kingdoms. The juxtaposition of the fictitious heritage of Chiang Saen and the over-documented state of three palaces in Phetburi province provides a clear contrast, though, admittedly, both chapters focus on myth-driven identity. Chapter 4

highlights the affection in Thai society for the nation and the king. Chapter 5 questions gender identity through the examination of matriarchal society in the old Hariphunchai kingdom. Chapter 6 recounts the tale of a denied heritage at Hellfire Pass in Kanchanaburi province.

The second part of the book, aptly named *Milieux de Mémoire*, demonstrates the environment of memory in Thailand, a domain in which identity is independent of the reinforcement of officially designated heritage. It focuses on heritage as a part of the Thais' everyday experience. Here, King makes a compelling argument that, in contrast to the example of Nora's France, Thailand is ripe with *milieux de mémoire*. Chapter 8 uses Bangkok's *khlong* (canals) to demonstrate enduring meaningful everyday heritage in Thailand. Chapter 9 studies the slum rehabilitation process as an example of the awkward negotiation of powers between formal authority and slum residents, whereas chapter 10 further explains the confrontation between the formalization and informalization of heritage in Thailand. Chapter 11 focuses on the decline of old craft communities in Bangkok. Chapter 12 is the only chapter in the *Milieux de Mémoire* section of the book that does not concern Bangkok. Instead, it challenges the understanding of alienated others in Thailand through the heritage of the dispersal of members of the Phuthai ethnic group.

The concluding chapter of the volume abruptly departs from previous coverage by focusing instead on the external factor in the creation of identity — the tourist gaze. King ends his book with a thought-provoking discourse on the impact of tourism on Thailand's self-identification. Regrettably, the discourse on the linkage between tourism and identity is hastily presented. The volume would have benefitted from further exploration of the subject, which could have served as a more poignant concluding remark.

Ploysri Porananond

Asian Journal of Tourism Research, Chiang Mai University, Thailand, email: ploysri.cmu@gmail.com.

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Vietnam's Lost Revolution: Ngô Đình Diệm's Failure to Build an Independent Nation, 1955–1963. By Geoffrey C. Stewart. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. xii+265 pp.

One of the hallmarks of Republic of Vietnam President Ngô Đình Diệm's regime (1955–63) was its concerted effort to bring about a Personalist Revolution (*Cách Mạng Nhân Vị*) throughout the Vietnamese nation. Geoffrey Stewart's first book chronicles how this revolution was "propagated at the grassroots ... across the South Vietnamese countryside" (p. 2) through the work of the Special Commissariat for Civic Action (*Đặc Ủy Phủ Công Dân Vụ*). Stewart's monograph represents the first dedicated scholarly treatment of this important state institution in either English or Vietnamese. Thorough engagement with Vietnamese and American archival documents relating to the subject informs its comprehensive account both of the political vision of the commissariat's leader Kiêu Công Cung and of the activities of its thousands of cadres. Beyond making a valuable contribution to a burgeoning historiography of nation-building in the Republic of Vietnam, Stewart builds on the recent work of Daniel Immerwahr (2015) to gesture at a crucial transnational context for Ngô Đình Diệm's revolution. He argues that the concept of "harnessing local human resources to a self-help effort" that provided the basis for the work of the Special Commissariat was "consistent with ideas underpinning a broad rural development