for domestic workers raises the question of whether or not her analysis may be biased towards experiences that culminate in stepwise trajectory. Also posing a challenge to the applicability of stepwise migration in analysing the migration trajectories of many 'low-waged' and 'low-skilled' workers are studies that illustrate that migrants' increasing reliance on intermediaries reduces their migration capabilities, which consequently may also limit their ability to reach aspired destinations. Nonetheless, this is an important book that not only challenges dominant paradigms in migration studies but, more importantly, invites further theorizations of the under-studied phenomenon of multinational migration.

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Mirroring Power: Ethnogenesis and Integration among the Phunoy of Northern Laos. By Vanina Bouté. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books and École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2018. 296 pp.

In her informative study of the Phunoy, a Tibeto-Burman group in northern Laos, French anthropologist Vanina Bouté shatters many generalized assumptions concerning 'Zomian' populations. Those used to include simplistic binaries such as upland versus lowland, Buddhism versus animism, state versus non-state. Instead, the case of the Phunoy reveals a non-linear history of "continual ethnogenesis" (p. 7), marked by varying relationships with external powers, by processes of adaptation and appropriation, and by internal differentiation and shifting identity discourses.

Since pre-colonial times, Phunoy oral history accounts suggest various levels of interaction with lowland powers such as Burmese, Lao and other Tai-speaking groups. In particular, relationships to the Lao kingdom of Luang Prabang and the Tai Lü polities of Sipsong

Panna shaped processes of territorialization and social differentiation among the Phunoy in the Sino-Lao borderlands — present-day Phongsali province. Most notably, Phunoy settlements along the Nam U river differed considerably because of these connections. On the right bank, certain privileges granted by the Lao king of Luang Prabang — and, later, by French colonial authorities — aggravated tendencies towards a hierarchized clan society. By contrast, villages on the left bank — rather loosely connected to Lü principalities — remained relatively egalitarian. This process entailed differences in land tenure, kinship systems and political organization (pp. 86–91).

Bouté convincingly elaborates how socio-political and ritual relations among the Phunoy changed according to their specific local networks. A rare case of a Tibeto-Burman society in Southeast Asia that converted to Theravada Buddhism, the Phunoy constitute an illustrative example of how Buddhist and animist ideas continue to correspond to and complement each other. The reforms of the communist Pathet Lao — Phongsali was the first 'liberated zone' of Laos in the 1940s along Houaphan province — added a new dimension to sociocultural configurations in the uplands. Here the book opens up fresh perspectives on understanding ritual reconfigurations, changing roles of religious officiants, and cultural resilience.

Lao national independence and the communist revolution certainly affected the Phunoy in many ways. Holding a privileged position among uplanders in Laos, Phunoy experience of communist minority politics was ambivalent to say the least. While many Phunoy obtained positions in the army and regional government, upland resettlement politics radically altered Phunoy social organization in the villages. Bouté's case studies illustrate many of the problems of resettlement in Laos. These problems include deteriorating social cohesion in upland villages and growing land pressure in densely populated multi-ethnic lowland communities after resettlement.

After tracing and analysing the complex historical experience of the Phunoy under colonialism and socialism, Bouté discusses the social and cultural dynamics in post-reform Laos that are

characterized by agricultural transformation, mobility and, more recently, urbanization. By introducing individual life stories, Bouté delivers valuable insights into Phunoy everyday life and people's hopes and aspirations. Through conversations with young migrants in the lowland cities and elders remaining in depopulated villages, she comes to a somewhat bleak conclusion: "[Phunoy] means leaving their village of origin" (p. 257). However, Bouté resists the temptation to present this as a tale of cultural loss and instead highlights individual ambitions and creativity to shape specific ideas of being Phunoy today.

In consequence, this study of an upland society allows ambiguities and inconsistencies within processes of ethnogenesis and integration. Bouté addresses important questions of identity and difference, about how changing social structures correspond with deliberate (re-)positioning vis-à-vis neighbouring polities (p. 192). Therefore, Phunoy strategies of 'mirroring power' — the construction of a privileged relationship with the various Tai and Lao realms that dominate the region — are crucial for the understanding of this group's manifold political, religious and economic changes, possibly exemplary for many other ethnic minorities in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Vanina Bouté's long-term experience of fieldwork among the Phunoy — from the late-1990s onwards — clearly leaves its mark on this comprehensive study of a specific upland society. Insightful and readable ethnographies that document the manifold political, economic and sociocultural entanglements in upland Southeast Asia are still a rare find. That said, *Mirroring Power* addresses the questions and concerns of both (ethno-)historians and anthropologists working on communities at the margins of the nation-state, and contributes to a deeper understanding of the multi-ethnic society of Laos. However, the chapters on religion could have benefitted from a more thorough consideration of recent developments in the anthropology of Lao and Lü Buddhism.

This book is an edited version of Bouté's French monograph *En miroir du pouvoir* (Mirroring Power), published in 2011 by the

École francaise d'Extrême-Orient, and its translation into English has made it accessible to a wider readership, as it is an invaluable contribution to Southeast Asian Studies. The book is a must-read for any scholar interested in the concept of 'Zomia' and its related debates, and it provides fascinating empirical material to enrich the teaching of Southeast Asian social anthropology more generally.

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Ayutthaya nai yan krungthep: silpakam thi samphan kap maenam lam khlong [Ayutthaya in the Bangkok Area: Art in Relation to Rivers and Canals]. By Praphatsot Chuwichian. Bangkok: Silpa Wathanatham, 2018. xv+367 pp.

As the author of this interesting book quite rightly points out in his preface, the flooding that annually plagues Bangkok's eight million residents is nothing new. Sedimentation that gradually raised the Chaophraya River delta above sea level over the course of the past millennium contributed to the adverse floodwater conditions during the wet seasons. The communities that settled in the lower river delta over the centuries have adapted their way of life to the area's aquatic reality. What is new, however, is the irresponsible ecological exploitation of Bangkok and its surrounding flood plains — supplemented by the deforestation of the upper Chaophraya watershed — over the past century and a half, which has transformed the delta's human ecology from 'adaptive' to increasingly 'adversarial', turning the annual inundation from friend to foe.

Among the various preoccupations of Thai historians in recent decades has been the delineation of the peopling of the lower Chaophraya delta from former centuries. The present study contributes to that body of research by surveying, analysing and