

École française 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

dating many of the lower delta's surviving ancient temples as a means of plotting the origins of the area's human settlement during the Ayutthaya era (1351–1767). That challenging interdisciplinary exercise entailed long and exhaustive fieldwork for the author. Specialist skills in art history were also required to examine the surviving architectural and archaeological fragments of major temple elements — presiding Buddha images (*phra phutha rup pratan*), ordination and congregation halls (*ubosot* and *wihan*), boundary stones (*bai sema*) and reliquary monuments (*chedi* and *prang*) — as a means of estimating their approximate dates of origin. It is fortunate that recent technological breakthroughs in satellite monitoring and remote sensing — culminating in the global positioning system (GPS) and Google Earth mapping — helped to make that task much more efficient.

During the Ayutthaya era, the lower delta — Ayutthaya's 'Gateway to the South Seas' (*pak tai*), otherwise known as 'the Sea of Mud' (*thale tom*) — attracted peasants from the lower social classes who engaged in wetlands foraging, fishing, fruit gardening, salt farming and local transport. Wet-rice cultivation was scarcely possible because of the lower delta's saline soil, and these pursuits substituted adequately for the staple Thai crop in generating a subsistence income. To cope with the isolation and insecurity of their frontier life, the pioneers clustered across river- and canal-side settlements. Each settlement was served by a temple providing a broad range of social functions, as well as linking the lower delta communities with the political, economic and cultural core at Ayutthaya. The importance of these community centres was reflected in their assembly halls' prominent and durable brick-and-mortar construction, which stood in contrast to the frail, impermanent wood and bamboo fabrication of all other village structures. The surviving remnants of the lower delta's many ancient village temples is the focus of the book's effort to delineate the chronology of settlements in the lower Chaophraya delta over the course of the Ayutthaya era.

The book focuses on the art styles observable in the sculpting and casting of the surviving temples' presiding Buddha images, the

carving of temple boundary stones, the architecture and stucco work of monastic assembly halls, and the contours of reliquary monuments. An entire chapter is devoted to Wat Prang Luang, located along the west bank of a major meander of the old Chaophraya River channel near the upstream limit of the lower delta, at Nonthaburi; a detailed examination of that ancient temple's archaeological remnants suggests that it is the oldest surviving temple in the lower Chaophraya Delta. The chapters that follow compare the main architectural and archaeological features of a large number of other temples scattered across the lower delta. The result is a rough periodization of the lower delta's expanding habitation over a series of half-century stages, from the late twenty-first century to the early twenty-fourth century B.E. — equivalent to the late sixteenth to early eighteenth century C.E. As would be expected, the lower delta's human settlement shows a gradual seaward filtration along the main waterways, spreading downstream along the river meanders and extending into the hinterlands with the digging of a network of westward-reaching shortcut and transverse canals, as well as several less important canals stretching eastward. But the imprecise datings of the process of canal extension — except for the mention of several of the most important cases in the dynastic chronicles — and human settlement — as exemplified by the founding of temples — emphasizes the amount of work that remains to be done in defining the course of the lower delta's inhabitation over the course of the Ayutthaya era.

A prime indicator of the book's value will be its stimulus to further research. Follow-up to the book's findings could well deal with (a) the reasons for the spread of human settlement along the river's west bank, leaving the east bank comparatively neglected over the course of the Ayutthaya era; (b) the politics and economics of the delta settlers' relations with the Ayutthaya heartland; (c) the ethnic composition of delta settlement, considering not only the Thai peasant-pioneers but also the complementary cases of Mon, Khmer, Cham, Malay and Chinese settlement; (d) the chronology of settlement as indicated by a forensic analysis of temple brickwork,

mortar, stucco work, bronze work; and (e) investigation of other, non-temple archaeological evidence of Ayutthaya-era settlement in the lower Chaophraya delta.

It is not often that a book written in a Southeast Asian language appears in the review pages of a scholarly journal that is published in English. *SOJOURN*'s decision to do so in this case is commendable, as it opens a window into the region's 'inner' world of scholarship on social and cultural issues. It is hoped that such opportunities will be multiplied in future as a means of bringing greater international attention to the often excellent, but inaccessible, work being done within the region's 'indigenous' scholarly community.

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First Queer Voices from Thailand: Uncle Go's Advice Columns for Gays, Lesbians, and Kathoey's. By Peter A. Jackson. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016. xxi+270 pp.

One of the leading authorities in Thai queer studies, Peter A. Jackson, has written extensively on the subject for thirty years. *Queer Bangkok: 21st Century Markets, Media, and Rights* (2011), which he edited, won the prestigious Ruth Benedict Book Prize awarded by the American Anthropological Association for Queer Anthropology. Compared to *Queer Bangkok*, which is current and looks towards the future, *First Queer Voices from Thailand* analyses selected correspondence that was published in Uncle Go's advice columns to present the nascent queer consciousness of Thai people in the late 1970s and 1980s. This book is the culmination and revision of two previous editions — *Male Homosexuality in Thailand* (1989) and *Dear Uncle Go: Male Homosexuality in Thailand* (1995) — that expand the book's coverage to include not only letters from Thai