

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

gay men but also those from lesbians and transgender women. As Thailand is set to be the first Southeast Asian country to legalize same-sex civil partnerships, *First Queer Voices* provides valuable insights to the foundational workings of Thai queer culture.

The book is divided into three parts focusing on *kathoeyes* (male-to-female transgender women), gays, and lesbians, respectively. The first part — which includes a new chapter not found in the previous two editions — discusses the origin of Uncle Go's columns, from his first interviews with *kathoeyes* and how they were represented in Thai magazines. Here and elsewhere in the book, Jackson provides a nuanced and complex analysis that calls Uncle Go out for his heterosexist perspective, which, Jackson argues, was prevalent among Thai society then. At the same time, he praises the agony uncle for advocating queer rights in Thailand. The paradox of Uncle Go — a heterosexual man giving advice to the LGBTQ community, and who is both a conservative proponent for dominant Thai values and a liberal supporter of LGBTQ rights — requires the reader to reconcile and accept that seemingly different sociocultural and political positions can coexist.

The insider-outsider status of Uncle Go mirrors Jackson's own position, for he is cautious of viewing Thai society for what it is and what it is not through a non-Western lens. To a large extent, he is successful. However, at times his circumspection may have worked against him, as he neglects the global influences on Thailand. In the first part of the book, he argues that while Thais might have interacted with Western communities that advocated sexual rights, "Thais themselves mediated this interaction" (p. 21). In the same vein, he writes that "*kathoey* culture appears as a distinctly local development" (p. 21). To treat any development of culture in isolation is to ignore the global influences of the increasingly connected world. The careful anthropological observations in the book may also appear dated, as Jackson himself admits in the introduction (p. xviii). At times, Jackson's analysis of the magazines neglects to situate the texts in their historical context. From 1962 to 1976 — a period that roughly coincides with the publications that were analysed by

Jackson — seventy thousand American servicemen visited Bangkok on three- or seven-day leisure trips from the Vietnam War. Could this influx of sex tourism by these servicemen during the war have had an impact on Thailand as it did in Singapore, where a market was created to meet the sexual demands of the American soldiers at Bugis Street (see Heng 2008)?

The second part of the book, in which Jackson revises the previous editions, is the strongest and most lucid. He explains with surgical precision the predicaments faced by Thai gay men, but also the sociocultural space that was given to them. Many concepts that he elucidates — such as familial obligations and patron-client relationships — can be extended to many Asian societies; the brilliance of his book lies in the resonance that many gay Asians feel in relation to culture and tradition. However, at moments, the organization of the chapters can obfuscate his message. Instead of inserting the numerous references on the impact of religion on queer Thai people throughout the book — Jackson is also a scholar in Thai Buddhism — it may have been better if he had devoted a chapter to Buddhism and homosexuality. How he organizes the argument in the chapters is also problematic when he includes translated letters to Uncle Go. These letters do not add much value to the argument of the chapters, and there is little if any analysis of them. Furthermore, in this section on gay men, it is strange to use a letter about a lesbian relationship to illustrate male gay culture (pp. 137–39). While Jackson's aim is to preserve these historical letters, it would be best if they were presented together in an appendix.

The new chapters on lesbians in part 3 are an important addition to the scholarship on the diversity of Thailand's modern queer cultures. However, the texts are treated ahistorically at times, ignoring the global impact of patriarchy. He writes that while gay men use the male pronoun for both active and passive partners, lesbians are likely to use a masculine pronoun for *tom* (butch) and feminine for *dee* (femme), demonstrating a more rigid hierarchical system for Thai lesbians. But he fails to consider that the hierarchical system may be patriarchy, a global system that affects lesbians around the

world. Gay men use the masculine pronoun because they do not want to abrogate their male privilege, whereas *toms* may want to gain access to it. Furthermore, with the slow and general erosion of patriarchy in Asia, there are noticeably fewer *toms* — many of them are androgynous now — proving perhaps that *tom/dee* is a trend embedded in patriarchy.

The book's organizational shortcomings do not distract the reader from the nuanced study of Thai sexualities from a Thai perspective, rather than from dominant Western queer concepts.

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The M Quotient: From Muar to Singapore: Extraordinary Stories of Resilience, Drive and Love. By Lilian Low. Singapore: Write Editions, 2017. xxiii+262 pp.

An intriguing title with skilful and heartfelt storytelling, this book recounts how thirteen talents — including the late President S.R. Nathan and Liu Thai Ker — who either came from Muar or who had spent an important period of their lives in this small town in