

questions. This is an excellent, well-written book, and I recommend it for anyone with an interest in Thailand or its security forces, especially during the Cold War.

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REFERENCE

Nipat Thonglek. 2016. “You Have to Believe It ... the First Police Chief in Siam Was a British Foreigner”, *Matichon*, 8 October 2016. https://www.matichon.co.th/columnists/news_314044

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Chiang Mai Between Empire and Modern Thailand: A City in the Colonial Margins. By Taylor M. Easum. Amsterdam University Press, 2023. 288 pp.

This book by Taylor M. Easum delves into the history of nineteenth-century Chiang Mai during the height of colonial expansion in Southeast Asia. Easum showcases Chiang Mai as a key kingdom on the “the colonial margins”. He illustrates how Siam treated Chiang Mai as a kind of semi-colonial state while the British took advantage of the city. Even though Chiang Mai was not a main hub like Bangkok was, it was vital for linking the big players in both the political and economic arenas.

The book opens by diving into Chiang Mai’s past life as part of the Lanna Kingdom. During the nineteenth century, the British began to push into Lanna to advance their economic interests after colonizing Burma. As a result, Chiang Mai, being the major city in the region, became contested territory as the British took an interest in the local teakwood sector when Burma’s supply was dwindling. In response, Siam, which had jurisdiction over Chiang Mai, began to intervene actively in the administration of the city. Easum digs into the historical changes that Chiang Mai underwent, such as how

the temples and government bureaucracy adapted themselves to fit into Siam's political framework. The narrative shows how Siam asserted control over Chiang Mai and effectively integrated it into the Siamese kingdom. In doing so, Siam emulated the tactics of the British Empire in managing its colonies, taking reference from nearby cities such as Singapore and Penang.

Both Siam and Britain gained from this political arrangement. Given the distance of Chiang Mai from the core of the British Empire, governing it directly would have required significant effort on the part of the British. Consequently, it was more practical for Britain to allow Siam to manage Chiang Mai while benefiting from the city's resources. This arrangement allowed Siam to incorporate Chiang Mai into its national orbit, ultimately integrating the city into the modern Siamese nation-state.

It is in this context that Easum positions Chiang Mai in the "colonial margins" (p. 11) between Siam and the British, and, correspondingly, draws three major implications for the city. The first is religious transformation. The Supreme Patriarch of Bangkok's Sangha, through the process of centralizing the Buddhist clerical system, made local monks in Chiang Mai less powerful. The second is economic transformation, with Chiang Mai starting to do business with the British, who wanted teak, a development that led to British businesses being established in Chiang Mai and an economic shift to trade and the exploitation of natural resources. The third is bureaucratic transformation, with Siam securing full control over Chiang Mai by adopting Western colonial administrative practices, as a result of which, it effectively became an internal colony under Siam's sphere of influence.

The shifts in the region transformed Chiang Mai from an independent city-state into part of the Siamese nation. And as Siam evolved into the "Modern Thai State" (pp. 11–12, 22), Chiang Mai became an integral part of this nation-state.

Easum's book is a valuable resource for understanding the challenges Chiang Mai faced during a period of significant historical transformation in Siam and Southeast Asia, amid the expansion of

Western colonial powers. The book is highly significant as it provides insights into why and how Chiang Mai became part of Thailand today and offers valuable clues about its potential future trajectory.

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Between War and the State: Civil Society in South Vietnam, 1954–1975. By Van Nguyen-Marshall. Southeast Asia Program Publications, an imprint of Cornell University Press, 2023. xvi+223 pp.

Van Nguyen-Marshall's *Between War and the State* exemplifies the Vietnam-centric turn in recent scholarship by treating the Republic of Vietnam (RVN, commonly referred to as South Vietnam) and its citizenry as a serious subject of inquiry in its own right. Rejecting caricatures of the RVN as a mere lackey of American imperialism and its peoples as passive actors, Nguyen-Marshall reconstructs a vibrant associational landscape in which she highlights a diverse cast of Vietnamese actors who shaped public life alongside, and sometimes in defiance of, the state. They include mutual aid associations, cultural clubs, professional societies, charitable organizations, community development groups, women's associations, student organizations and rights movements. Over the past two decades, newly opened archives and a growing recognition of South Vietnam's historiographical blind spots have spurred fresh work on the motivations, aspirations and actions of the people of the RVN. By foregrounding voluntary civic activity, the book extends this literature to an arena largely overlooked by earlier studies, which focused primarily on generals, ministers or the communist insurgency.

Nguyen-Marshall draws on a rich blend of sources, including archival records and textual evidence such as newspapers, official reports and memoirs, and, crucially, oral history interviews with participants. Of necessity, this evidentiary base privileges registered,