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Joshua A. Fogel
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by

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Good historical fiction always leaves a vivid impression on the readers' mind. Often historical fiction captures the atmosphere of a period it portrays more effectively than a detailed history book. Chin Shunshin's mystery, Murder in a Peking Studio or Pekin Yuyukan, is one such historical fiction that brings to life the dead of a far away past.

Historical fiction is a popular literary genre in Japan. Most of the historical novels are set in the Warring States period of the sixteenth century and the late Tokugawa and early Meiji era. Chin Shunshin's works are distinguished from others as the themes he has developed concern China, Chinese history, and Chinese people living in Japan.

Born in Kobe in 1924, Chin was a son of a Chinese trader from Taiwan. Chin retains Taiwan as the place of permanent domicile, which from the Japanese perspective means he is Chinese. However, he was raised and educated in Japan. Thus he has a deep knowledge of Japanese language, history, literature, and culture. One critic feels that Chin is a Japanese with the soul of a Chinese. His understanding of both Chinese and Japanese cultures provides Chin with the background for his unique contribution to literary world.
One of Chin's most popular novels is *Pekin Yuyukan*, translated by Joshua A. Fogel as *Murder in a Peking Studio*. The story is set in Peking in late 1903, on the eve of the Russo-Japanese War. Both Russia and Japan are competing to expand their power and influence in China. Russia has a long cherished desire to have an ice-free port in Asia. It takes the opportunity from the weakness of China after the Boxer Uprising to send troops into Manchuria and will stretch its influence to Korea. Japan, having the same ambition of expanding its sphere of influence in China and Korea, sees Russia as a threat. Japan decides to fight the Russians as soon as possible before Russia will be able to strengthen its forces in Manchuria. If this happens, it will be impossible for the Japanese army to defeat the Russian army. Therefore, in Peking, Japanese intelligence agents try to bribe high-level Chinese officials into forcing the Russians either to withdraw their troops from Manchuria or to stop pretending to withdraw. The Japanese bets that an unconditional demand for Russian troop withdrawal will force the Russians to pull back or fight. In the process of transacting the bribe, a murder takes place, a large amount of money disappears, and the budding anti-Ch'ing revolutionary movement is involved in the action.

Only a few historical figures such as Yuan Shih-k'ai and Na-t'ung appear in this novel; otherwise the main characters are fictional. However, Chin effectively captures the spirit of the period in which the novel is set. He reveals the confusion of the time, the conflicting interests, and people's emotions. The special relations between the anti-Ch'ing revolutionary Chinese students and scholars and their Japanese intellectual friends in the 1900s is well explained, as well as the process of widespread corruptions within the bureaucracy. In addition to an interesting short history of high-level administrational structure, the readers are also given a short course in the history and teachinque of stone inscription rubbing since one of the main characters is a renown
master of this art. Yet the readers should be warned that none of the detailed descriptions into history or culture in this novel are without purpose.

*Murder in a Peking Studio* is the first novel by Chin Shunshin to appear in English translation. Dr. Joshua A. Fogel's translation is flowing and pleasant to read. In addition, his introduction, which is the source of Chin's biography in this review, provides adequate information for readers new to Japanese mystery fiction. Chin's novel itself provides the readers with a lively understanding of the tension of the era.

It should be noted, however, that the vivid picture of Peking life in Chin's novel portrays more the life of the elite and intellectual. All the characters in this novel are either high-level officials or rich merchants, successful artists, scholars, and students returned from abroad. Even one of the major figures, Fang Lan, though she serves as a maid, has a dubious role which implies higher background than that of a servant class.

In addition, as Chin's story focuses mainly on the murder and theft puzzles, political issues are introduced but not satisfactorily discussed. Social issues are meagerly mentioned. Thus, well-written as it is, *Murder in a Peking Studio* is neither thought-provoking nor socially and politically critical enough to be used as a reading for classroom discussion. Yet, with its vibrant descriptions of the Chinese and Japanese elite interactions in the early decade of the twentieth century, this novel deserves to be selected as a background reading for students of modern Japanese and Chinese history. Certainly, it will keep the students entertained as well as make them feel more familiar or more in touch with the conflicts and tensions of the 1900s China.

*Sumalee Bumroongsook*
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Maps of Thailand are everpresent and everyone seems to take for granted what they mean in terms of the Thai nation. In the 1960s even professional historians made imaginary maps to prove the existence of "Thailand" from time immemorial. But after reading Thongchai Winichakul's *Siam Mapped*, you will never look at a map the same way again.

Thongchai deftly uses the simple mapping process to demonstrate how these technical projects do not reflect some unitary history of Thailand, but actually serve to create the history of Thailand. In this way *Siam Mapped* is disturbing of established ways of understanding Thai history, and thus Thailand itself.

The book is divided into 10 chapters which are both well written and well organized, making his argument quite clear throughout the book. Thongchai starts by examining ancient concepts of space which include both cosmological and strategic maps. These are both noteworthy because they use very different concepts of space and time: religious maps included the vertical dimensions of heaven and hell, while strategic maps measured space not in terms of distance, but in terms of time—the number of days march between two points. Neither of these maps contained boundaries.

Thongchai convincingly uses historical evidence to show how boundaries and sovereignty were far from stable in Southeast Asia up until the early twentieth century. Rather there were overlapping loyalties in a pattern of hierarchical interstate relations. For example, Luang Phrabang in what is now Laos at times was a tributary state to three separate masters: Vietnam, Burma and Bangkok. Or more to the point, Chiang Mai was a vassal to both Burma and Bangkok. Yet in such tributary formulas, Luang
Phrabang and Chiang Mai were both quite independent in the discharge of their own affairs.

But this was soon to change. Frontiers and boundaries became important issues with the arrival of Europeans. This is well known, but Thongchai puts a fascinating spin on this argument by clearly demonstrating how Bangkok used maps to expand its own power over these outlying areas. Thailand, thus, did not lose territory as the result of European imperialism in Southeast Asia.

Rather, Bangkok used the discursive and technical means of mapping to colonize areas which previously were not under its total control. Thongchai asks, What separates Thai colonization which is now celebrated as nation-building, from the English and French empires that are now universally condemned? Not much in the eyes of the colonized, is his answer.

Thongchai uses this historical evidence to prove that Thai nationhood is far from a natural thing, but is very much the product of human endeavors. Rather than employing the discourse of nation-building which reinforces the unity of the Thai state, Siam Mapped shows how nations have been imaginatively created, often at the expense of the cultural and political diversity of what we now call Southeast Asia. Thongchai does this by shifting from a Bangkok-centered view of Thai history to a perspective that starts from the local histories of the many smaller communities. In this, Thongchai adds a significant thrust to a controversial view of nationhood that has been debated in historical circles for the past few years.

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George J. Aditjondro, In The Shadow of Mount Ramelau: The Impact of the Occupation of East Timor, Leiden, The
**Netherlands: Indoc** (Indonesian Documentation and Information Centre), 1994, 96 pages.

Lately renewed attention is being placed on Indonesia's spotty human rights record. The problem is that the Suharto government has exercised very tight control over information about its activities. Though it has been 20 years since the Indonesian army invaded the then newly independent state of East Timor, there is little solid research written about it.

George J. Aditjondro's book, *In The Shadow of Mount Ramelau: The Impact of the Occupation of East Timor*, published in June 1994 thus is an important source of up to date information about the struggle in that country. While most human rights organizations focus on tragic events, such as the 1991 massacre in the capital of East Timor, Dili, Aditjondro's booklet is a great source of the background material needed to understand the whole situation.

Aditjondro is an academic in the best sense of the term. Rather than writing a polemic, he provides readers with information and interpretations from a number of different points of view.

The book is refreshing because rather than arguing, for example, that the East Timor culture either wholly similar or completely distinct from Indonesian culture, Aditjondro points out that there are aspects of both. Still, Aditjondro pulls no punches in holding the Indonesian army, with the support of many Western governments, responsible for the decimation of the East Timorese.

The booklet is divided into 9 chapters which address not only the political situation, but weave it into a consideration of the colonial, historical, cultural, economic, ethnic, linguistic, diplomatic, women's, and religious issues as well.
Most importantly, Aditjondro points out the enormous environmental impact the Indonesian occupation has had on East Timor. In addition to genocide, the Indonesian army is committing "ecocide".

These articles were originally written and published in Indonesia, and the translations show how the impact of occupation has not been beneficial for most Indonesian citizens either. The only people benefiting are the army and business elites who, Aditjondro clearly documents, are exploiting the resources of East Timor through government sanctioned monopolies.

There is a wealth of fascinating detail in this short work. Its 96 pages include 10 maps, 13 pictures and 20 tables. There are a few typographical errors, and the maps and tables reproduced from Indonesian and Portuguese sources need to be translated. In further editions, I hope that Aditjondro can actually write more text to further explain the important data of the tables and maps.

William A. Callahan
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Since the end of the Cold War new ideological struggles have been popping up in the oddest places. In Singapore and Malaysia leaders have been talking about a new version of democracy which is different enough to warrant its own name: "Asian Democracy".

Though it is a popular topic for speeches, thus far there has been little sustained writing done on "Asian Democracy". Democracy & Capitalism: Asian and American Perspectives which gathers together four essays from a January 1993 seminar in Singapore attempts to outline this topic. But ultimately this book fails to produce any new or interesting material.
On the face of it, the book appears to be a good source of information. Chan Heng Chee's leading essay defines "democracy" in Asia and then looks at the history of democratic governments in a selection of Asian countries. Her conclusions are that Asian democracy entails a communitarian sense where authority is respected in a strong interventionist state which is dominated by one political party.

Huntington's essay on "American Democracy in Relation to Asia" seems to confirm the radical differences between American democracy and Asian democracy. Yet by the end of Chapter 2 the theoretical problems are so glaring that they undermine the whole project of differentiating democracy along these continental lines.

To understand how the arguments break down we need to examine some of the presuppositions upon which "Asian Democracy" is founded. For example, the text quickly reduces democracy to electoral politics. Chan Heng Chee quotes Huntington who quotes Schumpeter who tells us that democracy is a "procedural arrangement". Though Huntington confidently states that democracy as electorism is "now almost universally accepted" by scholars, I must beg to differ.

In democratic theory this electoralism is actually known as "elite democracy." On the other hand popular democracy is not merely procedural, but appeals to the more literal translation of "people power" with citizens solving their own problems. Yet using her definition of "elite democracy" which allows little space for civil society Chan can talk about authoritarianism in places like Indonesia as a variant of democracy.

The "Asia" of Asian Democracy is also involved in a peculiar mapping of this region. The text seems to have a very severe case of the hiccups where one term is quickly substituted for another quite different term. For example, in Huntington's essay, Confucianism is not read just as "China", but as the continent of Asia.
Likewise phrases like "the West, led by the United States" dot the text, even though English and especially French might beg to differ, not to even mention the variations within the U.S.

This gross reduction (of Asian culture to Confucianism) and inflation (of America to the West) arises from an impoverished view of culture. Rather than seeing culture as a living thing, Chan sees tradition as static: East is uniquely East and West is essentially West. Anything they might have in common is of no interest.

More to the point, Chan and Huntington seem to argue that shared experience is unnatural because traditional indigenous culture taken as wholly incompatible with modern democracy. Huntington uses a "species-ization" of humanity, where (to take the biological metaphor to its logical conclusion) Asian Democracy and American Democracy cannot mate to produce a luk krueng ideology.

While capitalism is largely ignored in the first two essays, the second two essays gloss over democracy. Or to put it another way, Shijuro Ogata tells us about non-democratic politics when he describes the difference between laissez faire capitalism and state capitalism. State capitalism in Asia is perfectly compatible with authoritarian government, because it does not rely on small scale enterprise and creativity, only foreign investment and imported technology.

In his essay Robert L. Bartley sings the praises of free market capitalism, and freedom. It is telling that only in Singapore is the Wall Street Journal seen as a "liberal" media. Yet it is disappointing that such un-original writing is selected as the "state-of-the-art".

Actually, none of the people chosen for this book is a champion of popular politics or economics. Not surprisingly, Chan repeats the official Singaporean view. Yet it is quite odd that
Huntington was chosen to speak for democracy in America. He is mostly known for promoting an elite-driven comparative politics of development, not as a democratic theorist.

Thus, in the end all four essays reflect the conservative strains in each of their countries. (Indeed, these authors might have much more in common than they care to admit!) In this way *Democracy & Capitalism: Asian and American Perspectives* is a blunt example of the relation between power and knowledge. Those in control define the (extremely narrow) terms of debate and thus the ultimate "truth". A truth that largely excludes Thailand -- with its Buddhist civilization and vibrant civil society -- from this "Asian Democracy".

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There has been much talk in Asia about the struggle between governments and multinational corporations, between politics and economics. But there is a third area of activity that is largely ignored by this popular fashioning of society into public and private sectors: the civil society of voluntary associations that act between the state and the economy.

Up until now there has been very little written about the impact of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations on the political and economic dynamics of Asia. Hence, Isagani R. Serrano's new book *Civil Society in the Asia-Pacific Region* which provides a concise introduction to this topic is recommended to the general reader.

Serrano's purpose is both to inform and organize people by offering a profile of civil society in terms of its roots,
motivations, inspirations, visions, purposes, activities, means, hardships and successes.

So Serrano sets up a difficult task: to describe a diverse set of organizations in so many ways in such a short space: less than 100 pages. Surprisingly, Serrano accomplishes his goal quite well by integrating two very different texts which generalize while maintaining the specifics.

On the one hand, he writes a general history and analysis of popular organizations in the Asia-Pacific Region through 6 chapters on topics like "From the Margins to the Mainstream", "Voluntary Action in the Asia-Pacific", and "Transnational Democracy in the Asia-Pacific". In this way Serrano looks at ways of developing pluralism and empowerment for common people. A recurring theme is how in the past few years issues of human rights, environment and development have been fusing together.

On the other hand, interspersed in these chapters are boxes which describe specific organizations in the space of one or two pages. The topics range from "The Societies Act of Malaysia", to "NGOs in China", "The Poor Go Banking", "First Asian Indigenous Women's Conference" and "Japanese Housewives in Environmental Activism". In this way readers can get a quick sense of the multifarious activities going on in the Asia-Pacific.

There are also 4 Annexes written by other authors appended to Serrano's essay to further flesh out the workings of civil society in this region. The first Annex by Rajesh Tandon more theoretically analyzes *Civil Society, the State and the Role of NGOs*. His basic point is that rather than being called the third sector civil society should be called the first sector since "Civil Society creates the values and normative framework for governance."

In the Second Annex *Organizations of Civil Society: Bangladesh*, Richard Holloway gives a useful typology of different kinds
of organizations in civil society: membership organizations which are involved in self-help projects, non-member organizations like NGOs which help others, and spurious organizations which do not help any target group, but are set up for personal profit and other reasons.

Gawin Chutima discusses *Thai NGOs and Civil Society* in the Third Annex. Starting from the defining moment of October 14, 1973, Gawin talks about the changing relationship between the state and the people in Thailand. Gawin quotes numerous academics and activists to trace the developments in voluntary organizations from non-profit organizations before 1973 to mass political and social movements of the democratic period, to the present configuration of NGOs which stress non-violent tactics and decentralization. Gawin touches on many other important issues such as the uneasy relationship between NGOs and the middle class.

The last Annex *Asia-Pacific in the 1990s: A Philippine Perspective* by The Forum for Philippine Alternatives is a fascinating account of the international relations of the region and how citizen's diplomacy can affect it. It starts from analysis which argues that "The Asia-Pacific region is today marked by an unstable combination of US military predominance and Japanese economic hegemony."

It suggests that other groups set up An Asia-Pacific Technoeconomic Bloc (outside of APEC and EAEG) to address the economic domination of Japan. Likewise, an Alternative Regional Security System would move to check unilateral military action by the U.S. These new organizations should be initiated and influenced by a Regional Congress of NGOs "which would provide a powerful counter-balance ... to regional governments, Japan and the US."
Altogether Civil Society in the Asia-Pacific Region, is an interesting and useful book which provides an enormous amount of information from a wide variety of perspectives in a small space. Its main fault is that at times Serrano romanticizes civil society and seems to be involved in polemics that only those intimately familiar with the Filipino NGO scene can understand.

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It is most welcome to have a chance to see how Japanese professors teach Japanese students about Japanese politics. Abe, Shindo and Kawato's The Government and Politics of Japan as translated by James W. White provides this chance. This book is clearly written and is divided into five parts -- National Government, Local Government, Policy Issues and Dilemmas, Political Participation, and Political Culture. Each of these parts is then divided into chapters of about 10-15 pages each.

Thus The Government and Politics of Japan is very much a textbook. It is useful because in these parts and chapters it explains both the familiar (the parliamentary system) and the unfamiliar (Koenkai, Ringi) aspects of Japanese politics and government in easy to read terms. The 16 tables and 11 figures add meat to the text, and make it a valuable resource for teachers even if they are using different texts. The main problem with The Government and Politics of Japan is that this very orderly treatment turns the very colorful informal politics of Japan into a rather bland summary.

The Translator's Introduction is also quite misleading. White tells us that this will be a radical treatment of Japanese
nationalism, politics and history which is "more critical of Japan than Americans are" (xi). Certainly it is interesting to read Abe et al's vigorous criticism of the imperial system, and what they call the "political schizophrenia" of constitutional monarchy in Japan before the end of World War II. As they write, even their discussion would be illegal: "Criticism of the imperial system was a serious crime - and advocacy of its alternation a capital one -- and academic research that questioned the imperial system was forbidden, too" (8).

Yet the text itself mainly deals with Japanese history at the beginning of chapters, something that has been left behind with modernization. The opening pages of the book are exemplary in that they state that before the western imperial intervention, there was no politics because "Social order seemed to exist naturally and immutably in the form of the traditional family and community rules..."

I usually do not trust litmus tests, but it is interesting that World War II is largely absent from this book. Even more telling, the chapter on problematic nature of Japanese nationalism was written especially for the English edition -- thus it is not in the Japanese edition. We cannot single out Abe, Shindo, and Kawato for this phenomenon since it is fairly common in Japanese texts, but it does tend to temper White's claim that the book is a radical treatment of Japanese politics. Still, I recommend reading this book, and suggest that it can be useful as a text, so long as it is not the only source that students have.

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For those who are trying to understand Thai politics, there are few books in English available which can make sense of both current events and long term political trends. Associate Professor Prudhisan Jumbala's *Nation-Building and Democratization in Thailand: a Political History* is one of these important books. It is useful because Prudhisan does an admirable job of boiling down into a very readable form specialized research of Thai politics ranging from traditional rule in the Sukothai up to the present fascination with Non-Governmental Organizations.

Thus even though *Nation-Building and Democratization in Thailand* was originally written in 1986 and published in late 1992, Prudhisan can help the average reader understand the current political crisis over constitutional issues. Recall that in 1994 the Opposition proposed a re-warmed version of the 1978 Constitution, and called it "democratic". Prudhisan had this to say about the 1978 Constitution:

"The 1978 constitution symbolized a compromise between two elites, military-bureaucratic and extra-bureaucratic..... Both elites feared worker and peasant upsurges that would endanger their respective interests." [89]

It is the analysis of details like these that give a work lasting value for both an academic and a popular audience, because it allows us to see that what we are told is "new and improved" is often a rehash of a tired theme.

Prudhisan divides the 129 page text into three sections and a postscript: Evolution of the Political System (Sukothai-1932), Power Configurations and Constitutions (1932-1968), The Political Participation Issue (1968-1986), and the postscript brings us up to 1992.

But rather than summarize these four sections and show how well organized, comprehensive and (for those of you who love footnotes) well-referenced the text is, I would like to point out
that in addition to answering many questions about Thai politics, Prudhisan raises many questions in regard to the pivotal relationship between nation-building and democracy. As Prudhisan writes in the opening lines:

“This book attempts to portray the modern Thai political system with an eye on the extent to which the democratic form of government has taken root while simultaneously recognizing the very real way in which traditional institutions and practices have held sway.” [1]

Thus Nation-Building and Democratization is an apt title for the book, and understanding this crucial dynamic is important not just for Thailand, but for the rest of Southeast Asia as well. Prudhisan argues, contra people like Lee Kuan Yew, that "Until such time as official nationalism incorporates "the people" into the equation, Thailand's problems of nation-building will remain." [117]

Thus Prudhisan does not take either "nationalism" or "democracy" for granted, but explores their complexities through a thoughtful critical history of how various groups have used these concept for their own ends.

For example, he sees "nationalism" in two ways: the official nationalism popularized by Rama VI in the slogan "Nation, Religion, Monarchy", thus

making "nationalism" into an elite instrument to oppose constitutionalism, democracy and socialism. It is important to note that this practice has been handed down to the present. [16-17]

This elite notion of nationalism has been perpetuated by the modern Thai Army, whose original function was not for defense against foreign aggressors, but for "maintaining internal stability in the face of rebellions...This original function of the army can be said to have endured to the present." [12]
Democracy as it was established with the 1932 Revolution which established the Constitutional Monarchy in Thailand is also problematic for Prudhisana. Though the coup makers were motivated by a desire to have constitutionalism and parliamentary democracy in Thailand, they also had the need to protect their own bureaucratic group interest.

Non-bureaucratic sectors of the population were largely mere spectators. The group did not appear to have considered mass mobilization. By virtue of this the coup was far from a social revolution. [23]

Thus the revolution in 1932 just shifted power from one elite to another, and set the stage for the military's domination over politics in Thailand's "democratic history".

Most books stop their discussion of "nationalism" and "democracy" accepting these elite versions as "Thai", but Prudhisana also writes the history of popular expressions of "nationalism" and "democracy." Thus the political struggle is not necessarily between nationalism and democracy (which did, after all, grow up together in 18th century European Enlightenment), but between elite forms of these two inter-related concepts, and popular forms.

The popular expressions of nationalism and democracy started with the 1968 Constitution that made political participation an issue. From that point on there were extra-bureaucratic challenges to the military government, culminating in the political activism of the 1970s which organized Thais around the country in grassroots democracy.

Nationalism in its Left-wing form was anti-imperialist and a critique of global capitalism, making nationalism for the common people, workers and peasants. The Right responded by denying the Left's claim to nationalism according to "Nation, Religion, Monarchy":

...
In response, the Left could do little but to talk in terms of the official nationalist language, redefining the "Nation" to mean "the people" and arguing that the other two institutions should serve the interests of the people." [75]

But this new nationalism was overwhelmed by the official nationalism of "Nation, Religion and Monarchy" which was backed by military and police power, television and radio.

This mass campaign against the Left, though terribly violent, in an odd way signifies a "democratization" of Right-wing tactics: "The fact that the military-bureaucratic elements had to [mobilize sections of the middle and lower classes] to stage their return to power was in itself something new in Thai politics In other words, the days of complete political passivity of the masses are gone." [82] And Prudhisan writes the history of the 1980s as the inter-elite competition between bureaucratic-military groups and extra-bureaucratic business groups for popular support.

Nationalism and democracy in their popular forms came together again in 1992 in civil society's response to military dictatorship. Yet this civil society has had influence beyond the resignation of Gen Suchinda Kraprayoon, because it signifies a different kind of democracy:

It increasingly appeared that the NGO network was providing a channel of representation for the rural and urban disadvantaged as an alternative to the generally ineffectual political parties and parliament. [119]

The civil society in the rural areas developed because of the economic disparites increased and environmental problems that the boom of the late 1980s brought. Rather than just pushing for parliamentary representation, these groups have an alternative alternative view of development which values participation over simple market economics. To do this, they appeal to traditional
Thai village life, thus also rescripting nationalism in a way which serves the people.

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The 1930s was a crucial time in world history. It set the pattern for the global struggles between fascism, communism and democracy that have dominated the balance of the twentieth century. The dramatic changes in Thailand from royalist rule to constitutional government to military state made the 1930s a watershed mark of Thai history as well.

In *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity*, Scot Barme considers the complexities of these momentous trends and events in terms of the interaction between one man and Thai history. To most Wichit is not known as a political actor, but as an author, playwright and song-writer who produced some of the most enduring patriotic books and songs including "Lu'at Suphan" and "Rak Muang Thai".

In this fascinating and readable study Barme shows how Wichit actually shaped political power through a manipulation of Thai history and culture. Barme frames the analysis in terms of the concepts of Nation, Civilization and Progress, and shows how these artefacts which are characteristic of Western Modernity were brought to Thailand by people like King Vajiravudh, Prince Damrong and finally Wichit to buttress official nationalism.

After a biography of Wichit's early life and career as a diplomat, a university lecturer and a writer, Barme documents how Wichit changed from being a royalist to a whole-hearted
supporter of the People's Party that led the overthrow of the absolute monarchy.

Wichit was a great asset to the new regime because he was able to use his studies of Western historical concepts -- Nation, Progress and Civilization -- to "create a new cosmology for Thailand, a conceptual system through which the contemporary Thai socio-political universe [can] be understood."

A new cosmology was possible after the 1932 revolution because the old world-view was in disarray, and thus the struggle for power created space for various new groups to define reality. To trace these struggles Barme deftly charts out the history of this period -- the 1932 Revolution, the Bowaradej Rebellion, Pridi Phanamyom's Socialism, the State Conventions, the Irredentist campaign, the Franco-Thai War -- and Wichit's often central place in defining these events and stories.

Wichit's vision eventually prevailed over the royalists and Pridi because he was able to control the future by re-shaping the past. Although the various political groups disagreed about the present, they had only Wichit's view of the past which effected the crucial task of "forg[ing] a link between pre- and post-revolutionary Siam."

Throughout the book Barme gives detailed accounts of how Wichit used culture and history in very political ways. For example, in 1934 Wichit was active in promotion of the Constitution, which included ceremonies to link the rational modern constitution with the religious domain: Miniature copies of the document were distributed to provincial governors and anointed by Buddhist monks, transforming the Constitution from a legal document into a sacred object.

The purpose of this campaign was to transfer popular loyalty from the monarchy to the constitution, hence Constitution Day replaced the king's birthday as the most notable day on the
Siamese calendar. Barmé concludes that the revolutionary government "compromised its stated democratic ideals by having the constitution absorbed into the conservative, élite-centered discourse" once the Constitution was added to the official nationalist trinity of Nation, Religion and Monarchy.

The next step in Wichit's career was to shift from Constitutionalism to Nationalism. Wichit used art for socio-political purposes through his leadership of the Department of Fine Arts (FAD) which he transformed from a small isolated institution into the key propaganda organ of the state. In this way Wichit was able to use the new state-controlled media, especially the radio, as a means of reordering and redefining the Thai conceptual universe.

This was not an innocent reordering either: Through the centralized state apparatus Thai history and culture were used to legitimize the military's growing domination of the state. Indeed, Barmé documents the important relationship that Wichit had with fascists in Japan, Italy and Germany; Wichit learned from people like Nazi Germany's Goebbels how to use mass culture to manufacture popular consent.

For example, Wichit used the ironic possibilities of the word "Thai" to slip between "freedom" and "nationalism". The irony is that the freedom of being Thai necessitated total obedience to the state. Resistance actually disqualified critics from Thainess. In other words, Wichit's "Thai" freedom is international -- freedom from colonialism -- not "free-thinking" within Thailand.

Indeed, under Wichit's "Thainess" there was no free-dressing, speaking, singing, naming either. The Rathaniyom State Conventions are a favorite example of the restrictive qualities of Wichit's Thai identity. Like the other fascist states, Wichit felt that the state had to intervene in daily life, because
he felt "certain notions and forms of behavior [were] fundamental to the well-being of the Thai nation."

This underlines how while Wichit was creating Thai identity, he was doing it in a very restrictive way: "By defining and helping to deploy an official discourse aimed at promoting unified purpose and action, Wichit played a central role in determining who would have a legitimate voice in Thai society, and who would not." Through his control of education and the media Wichit made sure that alternative views of "Thainess" would not get a widespread audience.

The State Conventions are significant politically: They were issued by the Prime Minister, and thus ignored the parliamentary procedures of the National Assembly. The first Convention on 24 June 1939 changed the name of the country from Siam to Thailand. This was remarkable symbolically because National Day displaced Constitution Day, and thus military power was seen as more legitimate than parliamentary process for political change.

Eleven other State Conventions soon followed to forge the Thai identity in terms of national security, national symbols, the economy, language, dress, and daily life. For example, the State Convention on dress "called on the public to dress in a neat and well-groomed manner." These regulations were "extraordinary in their detail. Men were expected to wear hats, shoes and socks, jackets and long trousers. Female fashion consisted of hats, skirts, blouses covering the shoulders, gloves, and high-heeled shoes."

Though the dress regulations were criticized at the time as "un-Thai", and are still ridiculed to this day, Barme points out that the dressing habit is actually "one of the enduring successes of the Phibun regime."

Barme concludes his analysis by examining the social and cultural aspects of Irredentism and the Franco-Thai Conflict of
1940-41. It is noteworthy that the campaign for the recovery of "lost provinces" was Framed in terms of Mussolini's conquest of Abyssinia and the Nazi's seizure of the Sudenland. Wichit added to this by writing heroic historical dramas to show how the Shan, Lao, and Khmer were brothers -- albeit younger brothers -- to the Thai.

Franco-Thai war is seen as a defining event in Thai identity: it ended the post-1932 struggles by bringing the Thai nation together in a "fusion of will culture and polity". Even though this small conflict didn't win Thailand much territory -- which later had to be given back -- it did unite Thailand into a particular type of "hypernationalist" community which set the stage for the militarism that persists in Thailand.

The book is full of fascinating details and arguments that Barme has culled from extensive and impressive research with the primary sources of Wichit's writings, official records, contemporary newspaper stories, diplomatic dispatches and interviews. Barme deftly uses these contemporary voices to give readers a feel for the thought and opinions of people in the 1930s.

Though Barme uses these documents carefully and critically, at times one feels that he is relying too heavily on certain sources: a large portion of the information comes from one newspaper and one English diplomat. Furthermore, while there is wonderful documentation in *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity* there is little interpretation. Barme lets the sources "speak for themselves" very well; still at times the book reads like a chronicle history and needs more analysis and commentary which take into account other histories of the period.

All in all, this book is important both as a biography of a major Thai figure and as a history of a time of intense
ideological and political struggle in Thailand. It is a testament to the worth of this book that it leaves the reader wanting more: One wishes that Barme continued his research to elaborate on Thak Chaloemtiarana's *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism* to make the important links between Wichit's post-war activities and Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat's military regime.

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