

another. The granularity of these accounts and of the snippets of charged personal choices and dreams are framed by a Foucauldian concept of power that shapes the practices of all parties and is the substance of all relationships.

The family that comprises the firm is littered with differentiations of class, gender, status, and power, but these fractures are mended and managed through idioms and ideals of familial and collective care and connectedness. The day-to-day of the factory is a series of stories, flirtations, competitions, sarcasms, and dreams of the future. The proprietor is the “father” of the firm who displays kindness and an engaged interest in his “children” who in turn are challenged to display their support and respect. However, these idealized relations are punctuated with practices of constant surveillance and spying as well as periodic ruptures caused by personal stand-offs and confrontations.

Throughout the narrative, Chakravarti connects these perceptions and constructs of familial belonging to aspects of production. She illustrates the precarious nature of employment for workers and contrasts it to the long service of the supervisors who through loyalty gained seniority, power, and work security. They are the sons and daughters of the firm. The other workers come and go in synchrony with the cycle of orders and the seasons. Family seeps into the firm at the managerial level too, as the proprietor relies on his son, in-laws, and cousin to manage the firm.

The to and fro from the poetic to the profound makes for good reading as when she describes when the patriarch visits the shop floor and “leaves behind the heady scent” of his expensive eau de toilette, which also means that wages will soon be paid. When wages are in arrears, the father disappears.

The firm is a production unit but is also a space where the evil eye must be countered through periodic religious rituals performed by a sheikh brought in specially by the proprietor and a set of gendered relationships that must be regulated and monitored, but it is also a resource upon which workers can rely for loans, exceptional payments, emergency funds, love interests, and social support.

The personal lives and lifestyles of some workers feature prominently in the three ethnographic chapters making it a character-driven narrative.

But the big picture is never lost, as the last chapter details the management take-over of the firm by a team of seemingly modernist and efficient professional managers who are brought in by the proprietor to save the factory from bankruptcy. This team promises the workers a future of stable and high incomes but soon runs the whole operation to the ground by virtue of an abrasive and divisive as well as ineffective and unfair approach to factory management. This team shatters the “firm-as-family” ethos on the altar of efficiency and profitability, but fails dismally to run the factory or to get orders.

The book ends with the news of the Fashion Express closure and the loss of livelihood for workers.

The book is a valuable addition to the ethnography of Egypt in general and to gender stories in particular. It succeeds in describing the inner lives of men and women

working in the firm and in charting their social and sexual agency and aspirations. The chapter on the shop floor supervisors is potent in its portrayal of gendered strategies that enable these senior persons to yield influence. The young male supervisor, Zaim, adopts masculinized religiosity so as to defend his space and influence in the face of the more experienced and older well respected and much trusted female supervisors. Drama, performativity, and all sorts of public displays of morality and of wisdom ensure that supervisors succeed in keeping the work force loyal, competitive, and productive. They also listen to the stories of workers and provide support, understanding, discipline, and guidance.

The book is well written and conveys the humanity of its characters. It counters dominant notions of female docility on the shop floor and of male domination. It even questions the facile ideas of the power of management over workers as it shows how all the employees of Fashion Express – men and women, *entag* and *'edara*, young and old, the senior workers who had work security, and the temporarily employed precariat – faced the eminent closure of the factory and the failure of firms who had relied on globalized production for access to markets, but had no influence on how these relations of production are drafted and managed.

Hania Sholkamy

Cohen, Paul T. (ed.): *Charismatic Monks of Lanna Buddhism*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2017. 266 pp. ISBN 978-87-7694-195-6. (NIAS Studies in Asian Topics, 57) Price: £ 18.99

The aim of this wonderful and skillfully edited volume is to shed light on new dynamics in Lanna Buddhism of Northern Thailand. There are beautiful pictures of the most charismatic monks of Lanna Buddhism on the cover – with Khruba Bunchum the most famous living saint and the father of all holy men in northern Thailand – the deceased but highly praised Khruba Siwichai, living in the second half of the 19th century. The charismatic monks, called holy men (*ton bun*) in Thai, are at the center of scholarly interest and at the center of Buddhist revitalization, not only in Lanna, but also in Shan State, Myanmar, and in Sipsong Panna, southwest China. Every chapter in this volume is empirically rich and worth reading on its own.

The volume is looking at the role of Buddhist holy men in a rapidly transforming world. The volume begins with a very helpful and informative introduction by the editor. As Cohen explains, northern Thailand has a strong millenarian Buddhist tradition, with expectations of the advent of the future Buddha Ariya Metteyya (Maitreya), who would liberate the peasants from exploitation and suffering and bring economic prosperity.

Cohen rightly underlines the Karen tradition of messianic leaders who aimed to establish strong moral prototypical communities guided by Buddhist injection. But unlike the northeastern Phi Bun tradition, the Karen leaders welcomed royal support when it was forthcoming and thus participated in the difficult path of national integration.

Here comes the charismatic Khruba Siwichai in, who lived in the nineteenth century, masterfully presented by Katherine A. Bowie. Khruba Siwichai combined otherworldly qualities of the forest monk and this-worldly concerns for economic development. Widely renowned for his superhuman powers, Siwichai enjoyed huge popular support and was able to mobilize capital and labor for extremely meritorious religious buildings, temples, ordination halls, and pagodas. In her chapter, Bowie explains that Siwichai is rightly seen as a central figure of Lanna resistance to Siamese oppression and domination in northern Thailand and that the population, stricken by devastating epidemics and the fear of military conscription, projected its hope on the charismatic monk as a center of mobilizing discontent with the Siamese assault on local cultural traditions and on the Lanna *sangha* in particular. As P. T. Cohen explains, Siwichai is also at the center of the current revitalization of the personality cult in Lanna and the emergence of a generation of living saints. Siwichai was called Khruba, a honorary title underlining his wisdom, prestige, asceticism, and especially his contribution to Lanna Buddhism. Siwichai is widely famous for building the magnificent temple Doi Suthep and the road to the temple, overlooking Chiang Mai from a hill. His temples have become pilgrimage sites, widely venerated by the Lanna population who come to circle the temple with beautiful golden robes and to pray.

The revitalization of the Lanna tradition started with increasing decentralization, the enormous growth of tourism in Lanna, the growth of a fully-fledged university and new self-confidence in Lanna in the 1980s. Dissatisfied with an increasingly empty state *sangha*, and thirsty for new spirituality, the new urban middle class in Chiang Mai and urban centers in Lanna turned towards a new generation of *khruba* charismatic monks, teachers, and religious leaders. Outside of the structure of the *sangha*, but not in opposition to it, the *khruba* attract large followings and are widely famous for their qualities and powers that are tuned with Siwichai's characteristics. The *khrubas* are in the center of a revitalization of Lanna Buddhism, and the building of a Buddhahland, comprising a transnational moral community centered on the personality cult of the holy men.

Khruba monks are described as monks of exceptional qualities and supernatural powers who are appointed with the honorary title of Khruba either by their devotees or by the Supreme Patriarch of Shan State in a formal ritual. Chiangtung (in Burmese: Kengtung) is considered a holy site of Theravada Buddhism in the region. Outstanding for the qualities of the *khruba* are exceptional learning skills, superhuman abilities, and big contributions to Buddhism in the form of building ordination halls (*vihara*), pagodas (*chedi*), and renovating relics. It is through ascetic practices and meditative discipline that these virtuous forest monks were believed to acquire supranormal powers.

Cohen also has his own chapter in which he insightfully compares the traditions of Lanna (northern Thailand) with that of Isan (northeastern Thailand). Both Khruba Siwichai and Achan Man Phurithatto, and their lineages,

adhered to the Buddhist forest-monk tradition, including confirming to the 13 ascetic (*dhutanga*) practices. Cohen cites the work of Charles Keyes for pointing out divergences. Keyes identified Siwichai as a savior saint, a *bodhisattva*, who forgoes the attainment of enlightenment (*nirvana*) out of compassion and the desire to help other achieve salvation, while identifying Achan Man as a mystical saint, an *arahant*, who uncompromisingly renounces the world in order to achieve enlightenment and release from rebirth (C. Keyes, Death of Two Buddhist Saints in Thailand. In: M. A. Williams [ed.], Charisma and Sacred Biography. Chico 1981: 150). Helas, Taylor's work is cited to argue a tendency of commodification of both traditions, with urban elite patronage being a sensitive player in changing the dynamics of ascetic Buddhism (J. Taylor, Buddhism and Postmodern Imaginings in Thailand. The Religiosity of Urban Space. Farnham 2008: 158).

A. Lovenheim Irwin's chapter discusses the building aspirations and achievements of two *khrubas*, Khruba Kham La and Khruba Intha, who contributed to the building of religious monuments to construct a Buddhist kingdom. Irwin argues for religious construction no less than being in the center of Lanna Buddhism – accumulating charisma by giving their followers the opportunity of merit making. Cohen again has classified this type of Buddhist revivalism as a form of “active utopianism” (P. T. Cohen, The Sovereignty of Dhamma and Economic Development. Buddhist Social Ethics in Rural Thailand. *Journal of the Siam Society* 72.1984: 192–211).

M. Gravers' chapter is the only chapter that profoundly explores the efforts of Karen *khrubas* in the millenarian tradition to establish proto-utopian heavenly moral communities that are based on strict Buddhist injunctions. Similarly to the forest mystics in Isan, the *khruba* millenarian leaders were first regarded with suspicion by the Thai State, but later endorsed and benefitting from full support from members of the Thai royal family, changing the nature of the hermitage Huai Tom from an isolated utopian community to a major pilgrimage site in northern Thailand.

Kwanchewan Buadaeng focuses on the emerging agencies and different class segments of the devotees, using the interesting concept of assemblages. Kwanchewan shows that the ascetic leader and staunch Karen nationalist U Thuzana received massive moral and material support from different groups with vastly different locations in society, with devotee communities comprising traditional groups of highland believers, a big group of Karen migrant workers who find consolidation in the *khruba* and, more recently, billionaires who invited the *khruba* to reside in a Buddhist theme park in Chonburi Province.

The chapter by Sean Ashley focuses on the ethnography of Khruba Chao Thueang who promotes himself as a reincarnation of Siwichai, with similar faith-looks. Khruba Chao Thueang was appointed Khruba in December 2016 at Wat Sai Muang, Tachileik, and the reviewer was present. He built a very luxurious monastery in marble and gold on the grounds of Siwichai's temple at Wat Banden. But Ashley nicely focuses his chapter on the endorsement of Thueang by the Dara'ang, who have migrat-

ed to Chiang Mai Province, and who have faced hardships and social stress in confrontation with the Thai authorities. Thueang provided the Dara'ang with food, blankets, infrastructural buildings (roads and bridges), besides from blessing them and miraculously providing the Dara'ang with food and protecting them from harm. This is a case in which the *khru*ba is clearly identified as savior, but also as a powerful patron, who is not only able to control the field of merit, but also with invaluable access to resources, overcoming marginalization.

The fine chapter by Tatsuki Kataoka is very complementary as it shows the close loyalty of the non-Buddhist and non-Thai community of the highland Lahu with the most famous *khru*ba of the region today – Khruba Bunchum. The Lahu regard Khruba Bunchum as a God-King and have strong millenarian, apocalyptic expectations on the advent of the future Buddha or God-King, as outlined above.

The Shan, discussed in length by the chapter of Amporn Jirattikorn, see Bunchum even as a reincarnation of the Buddha. Using a similar frame as Kwanchewan, outlined above, argues that we ought to go beyond the framework of reciprocity, redistribution, and the moral economy idea put forward in much of Buddhist scholarship. Amporn J. has the courage to go new ways by exploring postmodern forms of branding and promoting the *khru*ba in the social media, such as facebook and twitter. These postmodern forms of communication connect the *khru*ba and his image with different forms of followers: Impoverished highland communities, the Thai urban middle class, and the Thai urban wealthy elites. Through a rich examination of the location of Khruba Bunchum in the local geography as well as political economy, Amporn J. is able to move into new directions of Buddhist studies. Amporn J. shows that the *khru*ba today not only fits the bill of millenarian expectations, but uses his position in the spiritual to mobilize capital and labor. In this sense, Khruba Bunchum meets the expectations and modern needs of asceticism (in the forest-monk imaging) and the status of a cultural entrepreneur: He is a wealthy ascetic who is supposed to spend all his fortune into Buddhist revivalism. In economic terms, we can say that merit is the currency and charisma the capital of modern Lanna Buddhism. In sum, the book is recommended to scholars working on Thai Buddhism, on charisma, on Buddhism, and economic relations, and scholars of mainland Southeast Asia.

Alexander Horstmann

Cook, Suzanne: *The Forest of the Lacandon Maya. An Ethnobotanical Guide.* New York: Springer, 2016. 379 pp. ISBN 978-1-4614-9110-1. Price: \$ 209.00

“The Forest of the Lacandon Maya. An Ethnobotanical Guide” by Suzanne Cook, reflects a new lens on Maya ethnobotany. She demonstrates the Lacandon intimate knowledge of the Maya forest as a garden, so integral to the value of the Maya forest. This knowledge is fast becoming history itself as each elder with accumulated wealth of this understanding passes out of our realm. With each passing, we lose volumes of information and with

the impact of globalization, the importance of this knowledge, that may appear irrelevant as in its unwritten form it is easily overlooked. The reality is completely the opposite. They are the heroes of the Maya forest who practice, as part of daily life, the language of the Maya forest. The conservation and management of the Maya forest depends on the Maya forest garden.

This increasingly ephemeral knowledge – largely because of the fact that it is a practice – has greater importance now more than ever before. Knowledge of the plants and their active agents, significant properties, specific media, relevant remedies, exact components, and universal aspects revealed by the Maya and logged in this book is largely a process of decades, centuries, even millennia of experimentation. The full appreciation of these potentials is only touched upon in this important book of Suzanne Cook. What we need are many Suzanne Cooks along with young people following in the footsteps of their elders to gain from the vision that one only can acquire when embedded in and relying on the local environment.

This book is designed to show how the Maya of the Lacandon Forest practices not only conserved the forest but facilitated its regeneration, a thesis promoted by Nations and Nigh (*The Evolutionary Potential of Lacandon Maya Sustained-Yield Tropical Forest Agriculture. Journal of Anthropological Research* 36.1980/1: 1–30) and pursued by Ford and Nigh (*The Maya Forest Garden. Eight Millennia of Sustainable Cultivation of the Tropical Woodlands.* Walnut Creek 2015). Cook argues that without the forest, the ecological knowledge and practice of the Lacandon would have no context and that the fates of both are deeply connected and “depend on the other to survive.”

Set in the Lacandon Forest, part of the western Maya area, the book provides a basis for appreciating the role of plants among the Lacandon culture. Cook describes her work with her able consultants who are both willing to share and to help her document the importance of nearly every facet of the forest that surrounds them. The methodological research she evokes relies on her Lacandon partners, whose knowledge is chronicled from a variety of individuals, sources that include women and men, young and old. As this matters! Children, whose views of the world are at a lower height, enjoy a different set of plants based on their reach!

Beginning with Cook’s heartfelt acknowledgements, the book provides an introduction to the lowland Maya and how to read her book. She follows with an overview of the language and geography. The core of her work is presented in chap. 4 and chap. 5 on the role of plants among the Lacandon. This is where her botanical and ethnographic inventory is presented. These two chapters are impressive and make this an amazing reference book, with plant species categorized with Lacandon and scientific names and listed by all the variety of household utilities from food, ritual, construction, adornment, construction, and more.

The book is liberally illustrated with nearly 500 color photographs that include plants and their context, explaining the resource, the production, the uses, and the setting.