

Democratic Kampuchea period inadequate to examine both the nature and size of the atrocities and killings committed by the Khmer Rouge, who were responsible for one of the major genocides of the twentieth century. Calling it the “the most tragic and violent period in Cambodia’s history” is not enough (p. 398).

The literature list reveals a slight bias towards American and, more broadly, Anglophone scholarship, though a few scholars from the region itself did break into their ranks, as did a few European authors writing in Dutch and French (a single German work also made it into the list). There is a set of maps for selected periods, which occasionally lack accuracy, especially Map 4, which gives a rather distorted picture of areas, cities and rivers in Burma. These quibbles apart, however, the work provides a readable, concise and comprehensive introduction to South-East Asian history from the beginning to the twenty-first century in a single volume. As such, the work is a well-executed replacement for the book to which it owes its making and will be a helpful item on reading lists not only for South-East Asian or Asian history classes, but also for the many undergraduate courses in world history.

Tilman Frasch

Manchester Metropolitan University

JUSTIN MCDANIEL:

The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk: Practicing Buddhism in Modern Thailand.

xiv, 327 pp. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011. \$41.50. ISBN 978 0 231 15376 8.

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This ambitious and original book continues McDaniel’s examination of situated knowledge in Thai Buddhist practice. He focuses on the stories, practices, beliefs and material culture surrounding the nineteenth-century monk, Somdet To, and the ghost, Mae Nak. By drawing on film, murals, manuscripts, printed texts, interviews, participant observation, rituals, statues, liturgies, amulets and photographs, McDaniel reveals the enduring relevance of a nineteenth-century monk and a ghost in contemporary Bangkok and beyond. Each of the stories, objects and practices with which McDaniel is concerned holds value not only for itself but for the relation it holds with other events, people, places and objects.

McDaniel focuses on Thai Buddhist engagement with Somdet To and Mae Nak as expressions of religiosity in central Thai Buddhism; he is concerned to explore how engagements with such figures reflect daily practices of relatedness. His argument is based on the principles of the repertoire: he develops a palimpsest of considerations of Buddhist accretions – arguing against the static analysis of texts, rituals and so on, he proposes that the notion of a cultural repertoire provides us with a useful tool for understanding the accumulation of religious sources by which agentive Buddhists navigate and make sense of the world, often in contradictory and uncategorizable ways. Repertoires are personal and unique – they may be internally inconsistent and contradictory and include a person’s experience, memories, and the stories that one inhabits as well as the reality one touches. These repertoires are evolving, constantly shifting, engaged with and negotiated through individual practice and reflection. The notion of a static or bracketable Thai Buddhism remains ever forestalled. His focus for such potentially abstract theory

is the grounded and ubiquitous practical technologies of Buddhist worship, practice and protection.

The chapters focus in turn on people, texts, actions and objects. Each may be read independently of the others but reading them together provides an elegant illustration of the theory of accumulative repertoire developed throughout. The first chapter is, in fact, less about people and more about how the hagiographic process is created by people – how the stories of Somdet To are produced, circulated and accumulated; the point being that there is no definitive or final biography of this famous monk. Somdet To's life is produced through multiple articulations linking in but not limited to ideas surrounding Thai nationalist discourse and the everyman. The second chapter is again about cumulative and contested phenomena, this time focusing on the *Jinapañjara Gāthā* (verses on the Victor's Armor). By unpacking what makes a text sacred in Thailand, how it is employed and to what ends, McDaniel explores the meaning of Thai Buddhist efficacy, in the process questioning the use of terms such as “esoteric” and “tantra”. The third chapter considers Thai Buddhist rituals and liturgies. Here McDaniel continues his argument that there is great variance in Thai Buddhist liturgies and rituals and that they defy any interpretation as orthodox, homogeneous or state-managed. Chapter 4 focuses on images, amulets, shrines and murals. Continuing the concern with situated knowledge, McDaniel considers how these objects “act”, and also act in relation to that which is around them. This is an argument against theories of syncretism, localization or commercialization – all of which imply hierarchy for McDaniel. Rather, the cacophony in which each object is located reveals situatedness and accretion. Value is located through association with other objects, with the people who both gave them and give to them. That is to say, material culture is understood to participate in the social construction of reality and is incorporated into individuals' religious repertoires. In the conclusion McDaniel expands his consideration of the repertoire and underscores his argument that engagement with saints, relics, rituals, magical practices, ghosts, and miracle stories are to be understood as being of central concern in Thai Buddhism.

In this work, McDaniel continues his meditations on the problematics of dichotomous categories in academic writing about Thai Buddhism. In his earlier work, *Gathering Leaves* (University of Washington Press, 2008), McDaniel persuasively argued against the notion of nineteenth-century canonical centralization and homogenization, demonstrating that while liturgical practice and texts in Bangkok were largely uniform during that time, the success of centralizing reform outside of the capital was limited. In that work he argued that centralist policies did not present a radical breach with earlier forms of education, that they were not effectively carried out in the rural north and north-east, and that education remained idiosyncratic and to a large extent influenced by the charisma of local monks. In tracing the history of curricula, textual practices, pedagogical methods, local rituals and continuities in monastic education throughout the period he argues that dichotomies between engaged/ascetic, scholarly/magic, urban/forest, while important at the level of discourse, were never clearly drawn in practice.

The Lovelorn Ghost adds further support to McDaniel's opposition to the use of dichotomous categories. For example, he argues against the notion of Buddhist practitioners being “impacted” by forces of globalization and modernization. He suggests that such an analytic approach creates a dichotomy of “victim–victimizer”, defines Thai Buddhism as static, and defines modernity far too narrowly. His ethnography forcefully underscores the point. In his exploration of Buddhist engagement with people, texts, rituals, liturgies, objects and art we see multiple moments in which Thai Buddhists pointedly defy categorization. By focusing on practices

McDaniel seeks to avoid overarching theories and take seriously those things that practitioners themselves take for granted. In so doing, of course, he slips overarching theory in through the back door. His theory of cultural repertoire is persuasive and speaks directly to work developed in anthropology and the social sciences by scholars such as Bruno Latour, Harold Garinkel, Michael Carrithers and Martin Holbraad. This is a compelling and ethnographically rich consideration of situated knowledge. It will be essential reading for all scholars of Thailand, Buddhist studies and anthropology.

Joanna Cook
University College London

JULIANE SCHOBER:

Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar. Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies, and Civil Society.

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In this book Schober explores the “conjunctures”, constellations between the state and the *sangha* in Myanmar that proved crucial for the subsequent position of the two agents towards each other. The first chapter outlines the situation during the Konbaung period, Burma’s last royal dynasty, and gives a brief introduction to the Buddhist economy of merit. She looks in detail at two kings, Bodawpaya (1784–1819) and Mindon Min (1853–79), who both attempted to reform the *sangha*. Bodawpaya succeeded (in part at least, but the quarrel continued as to whether monks should cover one or both shoulders when going out), whereas Mindon failed, as he lost control to the British over the order in Lower Burma. The second chapter investigates the impact of British rule on the traditional relationship. Chapters 3 and 4 advance the narrative to the early twentieth century, when the *sangha* became increasingly involved in the anti-colonial struggle and provided moral and organizational support to the people.

Chapter 5 addresses the first constellation in independent Burma, during the U Nu years. A devout Buddhist, U Nu not only invoked the traditional model of a just ruler (*dhammaraja*) to solidify his rule, but also sought to lead by example and re-entered the *sangha* on several occasions. Yet his attempts to give the *sangha* a higher organizational structure failed because many monks defied the jurisdiction of the religious courts created by the state. U Nu finally fell after an inept attempt to make Buddhism the state religion, thus alienating both leading Buddhists and the non-Buddhist minorities. Ne Win’s attempts to control the *sangha* were likewise unsuccessful, as was borne out by the relatively small number of monks who registered their status as required (p. 83). The dissociation of the monks from the state culminated in their participation in the 1988 uprisings that brought down the Ne Win government (chapter 6). The subsequent military regime offered both carrot and stick to the *sangha*, cracking down on certain monasteries and monks’ associations while simultaneously displaying their veneration of Buddhism by making donations to the *sangha* or attending Buddhist festivals, often wearing uniforms. Elevating Buddhism to this semi-official status, however, opened up new pathways for resistance to their co-religionists, especially in the form of meditation. Aung