

engagement with scholarly literature and specifically those theories relating to religion and emotion can be found throughout the book. We see hints in the footnotes and the sources consulted that appear in the bibliography, but nowhere is there an explicit discussion of how the ethnographic data engage with scholarship on religion and emotion to advance or challenge the field. Bringing the discussions from the footnotes up to the body of the text would have gone a long way in adding some theoretical depth to the already fine ethnographic narrative.

But none of this takes away from the fact that I will assign the book again in my course this year for it is clearly a work my students connect with. The colourful cast of characters that appear throughout the book and the various ways their culturally specific responses (not to mention the author's own) allow for a rich discussion of issues relating to religion, emotion, mental states, family dynamics, and gender. For those who enjoyed Sid Brown's *The journey of one Buddhist nun: Even against the wind* (2001) and Nancy Eberhardt's *Imagining the course of life: Self-transformation in a Shan Buddhist community* (2006), Julia Cassaniti's *Living Buddhism: Mind, self, and emotion in a Thai Community* is definitely something to read.

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*Siam's new detectives: Visualising crime and conspiracy in modern Thailand*

By SAMSON LIM

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Samson Lim's book is a specialised historical study of crime, the police force, and the visualisation of evidence in twentieth and twenty-first century Thailand. Beyond its comprehensive description of these developments, the strength of Lim's work is its methodological approach, which involves treating visual materials as productive sites of meaning through close analysis of their formal qualities.

The structure of Lim's text develops the line of reasoning produced by this methodological focus in a clear and logical manner. His first chapter succinctly outlines the context from which new methods of policing emerged, including the crime waves of the early twentieth century and the subsequent establishment of Siam's first police force. Later chapters are divided according to the source material under consideration. For instance, chapter 2 deals with material evidence and its documentation in statistics, photographs, reports and fingerprints; chapter 3, maps of crime scenes; chapter 4, re-enactments of criminal activities; and finally, chapter 5, visualisations of supposed networks of conspiracy.

Lim's text is replete with case studies recounted in meticulous detail, drawn from materials from the National Archives of Thailand, the Library and Museum of the Attorney General's Office of Thailand and various Thai-language newspapers. The author's contention that analogies may be found between fictional depictions of

crime in detective novels (pp. 71–3) and the actual practice of policing, is particularly apt given his own propensity towards evocative translations of these materials, the vast majority of which have never appeared in English-language scholarship.

Lim capably employs the novel nature of this source material to explain some of the idiomatic qualities of Thailand's systems for criminal investigation. For example, he explains the popularisation of photographs printed in the vernacular press, which represent suspects re-enacting the crimes of which they are accused, as a type of 'social activity' that acts 'as a ritual that mediates relationships between individuals (as suspects and victims) and institutions of the state like the police' (p. 111). In some instances, Lim's text gains particular relevance through his ability to shed new light on contemporary political realities. This is perhaps best illustrated in his reading of the schematic qualities of a diagram that was used by the Center for the Resolution of Emergency Situations (CRES) as evidence of an apparent conspiracy to overthrow the monarchy. Unfortunately, Lim incorrectly states that this visual document was used as rationale to legitimise a 2010 coup, which in actuality never occurred, but perhaps it was strategically deployed in the lead-up to the 2014 coup. Nonetheless, by drawing analogies between the visual qualities of the diagram and similar charts used to document the composition of social formations in academic studies, Lim makes clear the modalities through which rumour can achieve the aura of fact in present-day Thailand.

The period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where Lim locates the 'origins' (p. 33) of modern policing in Thailand, has received a significant amount of attention from historians who have positioned it as a time of epistemological transformation. The history of policing examined in Lim's text forms a part of these broader institutional transformations, which are generally thought of as being initiated under King Rama V (Chulalongkorn, r. 1868–1910) and continuing until after the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932. Specifically, Lim recognises that the visualisation of 'a specific category of action called crime' (p. 3) was a naturalisation of a new kind of epistemological order based on the veracity of visual evidence. Yet the significance of these developments within broader changes to notions of truth, objectivity and scientific rationalism in the Thai context is only implied in Lim's book. Indeed, it is not until the conclusion that he explicitly acknowledges that systems for organising knowledge and information, including those employed by the police force, were seen by Thailand's central government 'as a critical aspect of society worth controlling as part of its bid to consolidate authority over the kingdom' (p. 153).

At the same time, Lim is careful to avoid the temptation to frame these changes simply as processes of 'Westernisation'. As he states, his text 'should not be read as a tale of how science or some other branch of Western rationality has come to supplant local epistemologies' (p. 154). However, he stops short of pursuing the more radical implications of this statement through a discussion of how these different (or even competing) epistemological systems in Thailand might have been relativised through contact with one another, or how 'rationality' itself might have come to mean something different in the Thai context. In fact, Lim maintains a separation between 'folk epistemologies' and "'rational" thought' (p. 154) as two parallel modes of understanding the world that came to exist 'side by side' (p. 82).

Lim's book is important for its mining of previously undiscussed source material and detailed explication of case studies. It is an original, highly specific study, that nonetheless has ramifications for understanding broader sociopolitical realities in contemporary Thailand.

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