

is commendable for putting together a highly interesting anthology that navigates the terrain of Southeast Asia's contentious past. The book includes many chapters that are of interest to both specialists and non-specialists alike and provides important reading material for the study of the history of modern and contemporary Southeast Asia.

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Space and the Production of Cultural Difference among the Akha Prior to Globalization: Channeling the Flow of Life

DEBORAH E. TOOKER

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The Akha were the last highland group to move to Thailand in substantial numbers. On reaching Chiang Rai, where almost all their villages are now located, they were obliged to settle in areas passed over by the groups that had preceded them. When I participated in an evaluation of an indigenous Akha NGO, the Development and Agricultural Project for Akha, in the early-1990s, their relatively late arrival and the generally remote location of their villages seemed to significantly

contribute to the difficulties they were facing. Following visits to most of the Akha settlements in the province, the evaluation team could not identify even one thriving village self-sufficient in rice that was not beset with such challenges as the lack of citizenship for its members, victimization of its women such as through commercial sex, and high rates of HIV.

There are indeed thriving villages in neighboring countries at the present time, such as in Mong Long District of Luang Namtha in Laos and in the Mong Pawk area of the Wa Region in Myanmar where the villagers enjoy rice surpluses, sell handicrafts and forest items, and remain relatively free of such problems as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and social challenges. However, in Thailand since the 1990s, this has no longer been the case, with most villages suffering food shortages, the threat (sometimes the reality) of being expelled from the country, and obstacles in accessing the public education and health care to which citizens are entitled.

In *Space and the Production of Cultural Difference among the Akha Prior to Globalization*, Deborah Tooker reviews Akha spatial practices from 1982 to 1985. At this time, there were sustainable and thriving Akha villages in Thailand. Focusing on the use of space and how this delineated differences between the Akha and neighboring groups, she has written a focused ethnography on the Akha of the sort that is going out of fashion in anthropology that is increasingly dominated by postmodernist approaches.

This time frame, 1982–85, coincides with the start of her “participant-observational fieldwork” (p. 13) among the Akha, particularly the Loimi sub-group near Mae Sai. In 1985, not only did her initial fieldwork come to an end but she also observed “serious structural discontinuities” (p. 13) that the reader is obliged to conclude were to unsettle the practices she observed during her fieldwork. This year is also when “globalization” began to impact upon the Akha. Although she never defines globalization (despite its use in the book’s subtitle and its absence from the index), it indeed refers here to increased lowland and official Thai government mandates in the Akha hills. More specifically, globalization here refers to “the expansion of capitalism and the nation-state into the Northern Thai uplands” (p. 214).

As explained in Chapter 1, the author studies the use of space among the Akha using three interpretive frameworks. These are “the cultural meaning of space,” “the relationship of that meaning to regional meaning systems,” and “larger comparative and theoretical discussions about the meaning of space in relation to economic and political contexts . . . and identity construction” (p. 21). She explains that her focus is on space because it is “actively produced by social agents” (p. 24) and contributes to cultural differences between the Akha and others. Tooker contends that space is used by the Akha to access the “life force” that she calls “potency” (translated from the Akha term, *gylā*). She explains that potency is the force that “maintains, and indeed, serves to construct ‘Akha’ as an autonomous identity” (p. 42). She explains that potency provides access to a “cosmic energy” that maintains and creates social hierarchies both within Akha society and between the Akha and other ethnic groups (p. 24). Spatial practices (or tactics) include the relation-

ship established between the center and the periphery and the direction in which certain features, such as houses and gates, are placed.

She explains further that some may disagree with her viewing the Akha as a bounded culture; yet she takes this view because the Akha see themselves in this way. Similarly, while she recognizes the changing nature of village society, she explains that the main aspects of her study village did not change significantly during her three-year study period (but have since then).

Tooker describes in Chapter 2 how the Akha she studied, although living on the periphery of states run by powerful groups, viewed themselves as autonomous and having their own identity. Special reference is made to the community in which she conducted her research. In Chapter 3, she describes how the Akha's spatial dynamics, such as orienting the village in a particular direction consistent with cosmic forces, enabled them to access potency without having to depend on the larger states. When the Akha establish villages, they see it as reenacting the creation of the world and in so doing, reestablish critical spatial configurations. Chapter 4 covers how the Akha village is constructed. The Akha see the village as an entity extracted from the wilderness to form a settlement established apart from lowland states. It is through a dialectical relationship between Akha and lowland states, Tooker argues, that defines the Akha polity and identity. This chapter also reviews the "spatial tactics" within the village that are relevant to village-lowland state relationships. In Chapter 5, Tooker provides a detailed description of spatial practices relative to the household and the agricultural fields. She shows how the households have their own independent access to potency as a characteristic of an egalitarian society and that the household's spatial practices sometimes differ from those of the village as a whole. At the same time, the household and the village exist in a dynamic hierarchical relationship so that the household is never fully autonomous. Chapter 6 reviews the rituals that are related to the Akha's construction of inside and outside aspects of village life. While inside rituals comprise the Akha world, outside rituals defend the village against external forces that could threaten the community. In Chapter 7, Tooker discusses the relationships between the Akha world and the outside states as well as describing how the Akha view of spatial relationships compares with those of other groups in Southeast Asia.

Tooker argues that previous models of premodern "cosmic polities" in Southeast Asia, such as *mandala*, galactic polity, and emboxment, have been defined from the perspective of dominant lowland groups (p.215). This has resulted, she argues, in the scholarship on the subject being skewed to represent a top-down view of premodern states that ignores other models such as that of the Akha described in this book.

It should be noted, though, that the authors of these models referred to by her (such as Heine-Geldern and Condominas, to cite two of them) did not claim to be describing all the models of Southeast Asia. They were depicting the lowland states and other lowland groups such as the Tai whose communities are in valleys.

Heine-Geldern, for example, wrote "I shall confine myself to a discussion of some funda-

mental conceptions of state and kingship in those parts of Southeast Asia where Hindu-Buddhist civilization prevailed" (1942, 15). Although knowledgeable of upland societies, having written a thesis at the University of Vienna on highland groups near the border of India with Burma, he wanted here to describe lowland states.

Georges Condominas' discussions of social space and emboxment referred to the socio-political organization of Tai groups. In his book on social space, in which the concept (if not the actual term) of emboxment was introduced, he discusses Tai polities in one chapter (1980a, 259–316). In the same book, he describes how the Mnong Gar establish a new longhouse, thus covering some of the same ground examined in Tooker's book (1980b, 411–430). His review of the spatial and political organization of the people makes no reference to anything that can be compared to emboxment and does not attempt to place how the Mnong Gar organize the longhouse spatially into the system of emboxment.

More important, however, than whether Heine-Geldern and Condominas intended to produce a comprehensive model for all the societies of Southeast Asia is Tooker's point that there are diverse ways of spatial organization in the region. In making the case for diversity, especially among upland groups in Southeast Asia, Tooker diverges from the approach of James Scott who puts all the uplanders (and some valley dwellers) into the macro-grouping of Zomia (Scott 2009). Although his book appeared too close to the release of Tooker's work for her to thoroughly integrate an analysis of it into her text, Tooker clearly envisions a diversity of cultures and methods of spatial organization in Southeast Asia.

As an indication of the diversity in Southeast Asia, she challenges the idea that hill people necessarily organize their societies in less hierarchical ways than lowlanders. She points out (p. 233) that "hierarchy is embedded just as much in [Akha] ritual space as it is in that of the lowland polities." Other examples of hierarchical upland societies were in Karenni and in the Palaung center of Nam San, all of which had leaders who styled themselves as Saohpa (Shan rulers) with palaces and other accouterments of royalty (in what conventionally has been associated with lowland states).

All of this represents the continuing maturation of the study of highland cultures and peoples in Mainland Southeast Asia. As the understanding of highland groups grows more nuanced, the diversity of these peoples is being increasingly recognized as well as the ways that they have changed over time.

The fact that she has studied this village for so long has enabled her to attain a comprehensive understanding of the people and the place. This has precluded the need for her to write (as sometimes happens) a revision of her dissertation to accommodate some important new information she missed while doing her initial field research.

It is hoped that Tooker will continue with her analysis of Akha society into the more troubling times these people have been encountering since 1985 in what she calls the modern age. How the

Akha system of spatial organization coped (and/or failed to cope) with the monumental changes of increased access to the lowlands, the expansion of lowland political control over their villages, the spread of new diseases as well as various social problems is of considerable interest. Given her deep understanding of Akha society in the 1980s, any analytical study she might choose to undertake on Akha life since then should be enlightening to students of many disciplines. Such a study would also give clues on how to study Akha society prior to the 1980s as well.

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The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca

ERIC TAGLIACCOZZO

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In *The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and Pilgrimage to Mecca*, Eric Tagliacozzo presents a magisterial historical survey of the “undertaking of the Hajj from Southeast Asia to Arabia from earliest times to the present” (p. 3). The journey to Mecca required of all Muslims not only surpasses most other religious pilgrimages in size, number, and geographic extent, but also comprises one of the largest annual human migrations on earth—religious or otherwise. In turn, it should be no surprise that one of the biggest sources of Hajjis is Southeast Asia. Tagliacozzo weaves fragmentary extant scholarship and original new research into a compelling narrative of this “enormous phenomenon that draws in literally millions of people and spans the width and breadth of the Indian Ocean” (p. 7).

The Longest Journey is notable for its ambitious chronological sweep, the eclecticism of its methodology, and the range of its subject matter. Tagliacozzo organizes his book into three over-