Thailand Since the Coup

The February coup in Thailand came at a time when many had begun to think that Thai coups might be a thing of the past. While few would disagree that many of the claims of corruption made against the Chartchai government were justified, the record of those that deposed them is far from spotless. The military's involvement with arms and logging operations, not to mention their close relationships with some of the region's most repressive regimes—the Khmer Rouge, Chinese and Burma's SLORC—makes one wonder how the coup leaders would fare if they were to be subjected to investigative procedures similar to those which have been carried out on members of the previous government. Doubts about the credibility of the perpetrators of the coup were deepened even further when, in one of their first statements, they announced their intention to withdraw support for the Cambodian peace initiative which had been promoted by the Chartchai government. Fortunately this did not affect the course of events and the Cambodian peace accord came into effect, perhaps one of the few happy events of the year in international politics. The hostility of the reception given to Khieu Samphan on his return from Thailand demonstrated that the people of Phnom Penh have certainly not forgotten the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge, even if the international diplomatic community conveniently chose to ignore these in making the peace accord. The greatest regret must be that peace did not come several years earlier. While condemning the morality of those elements whose actions served to prolong the suffering of the Cambodian people, some searching questions should also be asked concerning the reasons why so little was done both within and outside Thailand to restrict arms the
supply of arms from China to the Khmer Rouge.

One ironic result of the February coup has been the renewed life which has been given to political debate within Thailand. This is despite a crackdown on organized labour (see Thai-Yunnan Project Newsletter, Number 14) and strict censorship, particularly of the broadcast media (for example in regard to the Channel 11 programme Mong Tang Mum. See Bangkok Post 22 October 1991.). The extent of the added vigour in debate is apparent in the depth of opposition to the draft constitution recently put forward by the ruling junta. In this context it is of considerable interest to see the emergence of a new political party, the Pracha Dhamma Party, comprised of former activists associated with the pro-democracy movement of the 70s, whose aim is to provide an alternative to the present crop of money and power-focussed parties (Far Eastern Economic Review, 12 Dec 1991).

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This new emphasis can only be considered timely. Despite the star-struck admiration which Thailand's growth appears to provoke among economists, it seems clear that the cost of rapid development has been widespread environmental degradation and an ever-widening gap between rich and poor. The enormity of health and social problems such as AIDS and the increasing flow of Thais prepared to risk working illegally in Japan are indications that the benefits of economic growth have failed to 'trickle down' to those less well-off. In this context a political party which is community-based therefore seems likely to win wide appeal. Again and again over recent years the Thai people have demonstrated a readiness for democratic government. It remains to be seen how much longer those who hold power will continue to treat the population as if they are unable to think for themselves.

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Thai Unions (Part 2) 1

Andrew Brown
Strikes and other forms of protest by wage labourers in Thailand date back to the early 1880s, continued to erupt throughout the 1890s and early years of the twentieth century and by the 1920s Thai workers were appealing to state officials to allow them to organize. Yet, by the late 1970s, unions had only ever been permitted to legally exist for short periods; 1932-34, 1944-47, 1955-57 and 1972-76. Although in each of these periods workers managed to make some significant gains in both the industrial and wider political arenas, such developments were subsequently brought to a halt through a renewed cycle of repression. It is against this long history of repression, short periods of grudging recognition, followed by renewed repression that the period of the 1980s seemed to offer some positive signs for a more permanent acceptance and recognition of union organisation. For the period 1981-89, when the right to strike was returned to labour, was the longest period in Thai history within which workers, in theory if not wholly in practice, legally held the basic rights considered necessary for union organisation. During this period unions were regarded by the government as partners in 'sound' labour relations, as an organisational means which could be employed to help promote the training, education and disciplining of workers and as contributors to increased productivity. Thus, it was argued that unions would have an important, some said an indispensable, role to play in ensuring that Thailand successfully continued its march into capitalist modernity.

This essay discusses the factors which encouraged this changing attitude toward labour then briefly reviews the way in which unions responded to the more open conditions of the 1980s. This analysis provides a backdrop to the developments which have taken place since the February coup [see Thai-Yunnan Project Newsletter Number 14, September 1991] which appear to be marking a return to a more repressive mode of labour control under which many of the gains made over the past decade are being reversed.

In the first place, the movement toward greater recognition of unions is related to the ongoing process of industrialisation. Although the history of Thai capitalism dates back to the latter decades of the nineteenth century, it has been over the last three decades in particular that capitalist relations of production have had their most pronounced impact on transforming the structure of the Thai political economy. From the 1850s to the end of the 1950s, Thailand's role in the International Division of Labour (IDL) was basically one of an exporter of four main primary products: rice, tin, teak and rubber and an importer of Western manufactured goods. Although industrial development was limited during the pre-1932 period, some significant movement into industrial production did in fact take place. Rice and timber milling and plantation agriculture were among the first enterprises to require the services of wage labourers. In addition, infrastructural projects such as the construction of railways, roads, ports, dockyards and bridges together with the growth of small scale private industries such as the manufacturing of bricks and tiles, textiles and soaps and matches, also led to a growth in demand for wage labour. These initial forays into industrial production advanced further during the post-1932 period with the rise of a state which was determined to pursue a policy of state-led
industrialisation (Hewison 1989:57). Over the following 25 years the state, by taking on the functions of policy maker, financier and model investor, actively promoted and became involved in a wide range of industrial activities. Though reasonably successful in furthering the expansion of capital accumulation, the policy of state-led industrialisation had, by the end of the 1950s, become problematic. The overthrow of the Phibun Songkhram government in September 1957 not only ushered in a highly authoritarian political order but also marked a watershed in Thailand's development strategy.

After seizing power through the twin coups of 1957 and 1958, army commander Sarit Thanarat made it clear that he intended to modernize Thailand's economy and society. Turning away from the state-led industrialisation policies of his predecessor, Sarit began to implement a development program within which a leading role was to be played by both foreign and domestic private capital. Under advice from the World Bank, the state was urged to assist industry by offering promotional privileges, improving laws related to business, expanding credit, providing necessary infrastructure, initiating development planning and adopting a strategy of import substitution industrialisation (ISI). According to Hewison (1989:104-121), the adoption of an ISI strategy had some negative effects such as exacerbating the bias toward rural areas, increasing income disparities and discrimination against export industries, however, it did change the structure of the economy. During the 1960s manufacturing's contribution to GDP rose from 12.5 percent to 17.5 percent and annual GDP growth averaged over 11 percent for the period. Moreover, high protection rates encouraged domestic manufacturing groups with the industrial and banking fractions of capital enjoying the greatest benefits. Although relatively successful, ISI had, by the early 1970s, begun to experience problems. As early as 1966 the influential Bangkok Bank began to argue for an expansion of manufactured exports and a revision of tariff schedules to aid local manufacturers who were producing for external markets. The shift away from ISI was hastened further by both domestic and international factors. Domestically, excess manufacturing was becoming a problem and investment began to decline. Moreover, fiscal problems began to force the government to consider the possibility of adopting Export Orientated Industrialisation (EOI) as a way of overcoming trade deficits. Moreover, higher inflation in Western countries and fluctuations in the exchange rate were making Thai manufactured goods more attractive on the world market. Although EOI has not completely replaced the ISI model it has nevertheless been in the ascendency since its formal recognition in the Third Development Plan (1971-1976). The adoption of EOI has led to some significant changes within the Thai economy. The value of manufactured exports rose rapidly from $40 million in 1970 to $270 million in 1973. By 1983 manufactured goods contributed 30 per cent of total exports as opposed to 15 percent in 1972 and only 5 percent in 1965 (Hewison 1989:120).

The adoption of both ISI and EOI development strategies has not only altered the structure of the economy but has also furthered the growth of a powerful, though fractionalized, domestic capitalist class. (Hewison 1989:Part Two). An industrial proletariat has also grown significantly. This is indicated by the following data. During the period 1958-1990, Thailand's population increased from about 23
million to 56.3 million with the labour force (defined as those 11 years and over) rising from 13.8 to 30.6 million. Persons employed in agriculture have fallen from 82% of the economically active population in 1960 to 70% in 1979, by 1990 this figure stood at 59.9%. Over the same period manufacturing employment rose from 3.4% in 1960 to 8.9% by the end of the 1980s (Asian Business 1988:81). In 1990, of the 10.8 million employed outside the agricultural sector, 2.6 million (9.02%), are classified as self-employed, 1.47 million (5.08%) are reported to be engaged in 'household labour', a mere 272,000 (0.93%) are categorized as employers, 1.9 million (6.5%) are employed in the public sector and 4.6 million (15.1%) are classified as private employees. Nearly three million (65.2%) of the latter are employed directly in manufacturing (Labour Studies and Planning Division, Department of Labour). The industries employing the largest number of workers have been textiles, garments and leather products followed by foods, beverages and tobacco. Employment in services and commerce have also grown rapidly in recent years (Sumalee 1984:6).

Thus, wage labour is becomingly increasingly important which in turn has meant that for both capital and the state the problem of labour control has now become a fundamental strategic issue. In addition, it is increasingly being recognized that if Thailand is to remain competitive it cannot rely simply on its 'comparative advantage' in labour intensive areas but rather must, to some extent at least, begin to follow already established NICs who have been concentrating of higher valued-added goods and services based on skilled employees. Such a shift poses major problems for big business and technocrat planners as outmoded education and training systems have been unable to meet growing demands for skilled blue and white collar labour. Economic changes has thus been opening the way toward a growing recognition that, rather than being 'obstacles' to development-a view propagated at the beginning of the Sarit period- unions may help bring a certain degree of stability to the labour market (Limqueco et.al. 1989:32). This is reflected in the emergence of a new ideological discourse on labour which accords unions a role in the achievement of these objectives. The following comments by the Vice-President of the influential Employer's Confederation of Thailand, are indicative of the views which have been gaining acceptance since the late 1970s:

The employer's associations, under the umbrella of the Employer's Confederation of Thailand, should also make their members aware that resistance to organized labour is a futile effort. Employers must recognize that the right to organize is a universal right of the workers which is guaranteed by law. Rather than fighting against it, employers should take a more, positive, enlightened approach to turn the adversaries into advocates, transforming negative energy into constructive one [sic.]. The Employers' Confederation of Thailand has contributed its part to the process of educating its members in the proper concept of labour relations. Employers have been constantly persuaded that good labour relations are conducive to better productivity and higher profit. Personnel management, which traditionally meant personnel record keeping, salary administration and maintenance of discipline, in several firms has been enlarged to human resource development (Sopon 1991:6).

While there was clearly a growing economic rationale for
greater union recognition and a sophisticated approach to human resources, political factors have also undoubtedly contributed to this development. Some comment on the explosion of labour militancy during the early 1970s is therefore necessary.

The 1970s witnessed worker resistance to exploitation. By 1970 almost half a million factory workers were receiving a mere 7-10 baht (20 baht=$US 1) a day in wages. Thousands were forced to sleep at their workplaces. There was no compensation for overtime, holidays, accidents or illness. Child labour was common and health and safety standards non-existent (Hewison, 1989:123). These conditions worsened between 1971 and 1973 as the economy experienced rising inflation. Working class resistance to these oppressive conditions began to gather momentum in the early 1970s and were part of wider social protests which ultimately led to overthrow of the military in October 1973. Well over a thousand strikes were officially recorded between 1973 and 1976 and by late 1976 185 unions had been formed (Morell and Chaianan 1981:189). Moreover, two large and influential peak councils were also established, the radical Labour Coordination Centre of Thailand (LCCT) and the labourist orientated Federation of Labour Unions of Thailand (FLUT). The growth of organized labour was, however, halted following the coup of October 1976 and the subsequent installation of an authoritarian government. However, another coup in October 1977 which brought General Kriangsak Chomanan to power was followed by the easing of repression with many believing that the experiences of the 1970s meant that the growth and development of an organized labour movement was 'irreversible' (Mabry 1979:81).

Nevertheless, while the activities and struggles of workers themselves have certainly been a major factor in forcing the elite toward a greater acceptance of organized labour, such recognition has also been facilitated by the existence of serious and deep divisions within the ruling class itself. Here it is sufficient to note that the Thai political stage has, since the tumultuous events of the 1970s, been occupied by a heterogenous group of actors: capitalist fractions, remnants of the feudal aristocracy and nobility, peasants, students, and various factions within the military and civilian bureaucracies. We should also note the existence of what Turton (1984:29) has termed a 'secondary complex of predatory interests': localized power structures spread throughout Thai society which comprise mafioso type groups led by gangster-like businessmen/politicians who maintain complex linkages with the military, police and business groups. Since the mid 1970s then the main political problem has been one of developing a suitable political form which may be able to cater for these diverse social forces and their varied interests. Out of this welter of contradictions there emerged concerted attempts by various competing groups to establish some form of parliamentary framework. During the 1980s the establishment of a parliamentary democracy, albeit under military 'guidance' for most of the period, remained the dominant trend culminating in the appointment of Chartchai Chunhavan the first democratically elected Prime Minister since 1976. For capital, part of the appeal of a parliamentary democratic form of rule is the characteristic institutional division between economic and political class struggle which often operates to the advantage of capital while weakening the position of labour. As Jessop (1978:29) observes:
From the viewpoint of capital the ideal position is one in which economic class struggle is confined within the limits of the market relation and political class struggle is confined within the limits of bourgeois parliamentarism. There would be a clear division between trade union struggles concerned with wages and conditions and political struggles to promote social reforms through parliamentary majorities and the mobilisation of public opinion.

The growth of a parliamentary form of politics was accompanied by the reemergence of a system of industrial relations thus reflecting the goal of a clear institutional division between economic and political struggle. Initial attempts to establish a stable industrial relations framework in which unions could operate and conflict could be managed and contained without spilling over into the political arena were first made in the 1950s. The system lasted for less than a year and was abolished by the Sarit administration. Further attempts were made in 1965 and 1972 and culminated in the promulgation of the 1975 Labour Relations Act which continued to govern the industrial relations environment during the 1980s. When the right to strike was restored to workers in January 1981 the 1975 law has represented, at least in theory, the principle structuring arrangements through which struggles between labour and capital have been fought out.

In sum, Thai workers and their organisations have faced a continual battle for recognition. Since the late 1970s, however, a new discourse emerged which recognized the legitimacy of unions and accorded them an important role in the future development of the country. Economic and political factors are associated with this development. Economic change has meant that control of workers represents a major problem for employers and state officials. There has been a growing view that unions may play a constructive role in the solution of this problem. Politically, we have noted that apart from the growth of labour as a major actor during the 1970s, the Thai political scene has been characterized by elite disunity. Out of this disunity there emerged a trend toward the growth of a representative form of politics which in turn was accompanied by a renewed attempt to establish a workable system of industrial relations. While these changes imposed new constraints on the possible forms which organized labour could take, they also offered new opportunities for unions to struggle to secure the interests of the working class.

There is not the space here to review in detail the various ways unions responded to the more open conditions of the 1980s. Nevertheless a number of brief comments need to be made. In the first place the decade witnessed a proliferation of unions with the basic unit of labour organisation being the enterprise union. In 1980 there were 255 registered unions and by early 1990 this figure had risen to 713. In addition, by the end of the 1980s there were 17 labour federations and 5 labour councils. However despite this rapid growth in the number of unions, union density remained very low being less than 5 percent of the 6 million strong wage-labour force. Density among state enterprise workers was quite high, however, being about 60% (180,000 out of 295,039 employees). This contrasted sharply with private sector union density which was approximately 3 percent. Overall, given that those entering wage employment increased over the period of the 1980s with manufacturing employees rising from 2 million to 2.6 million and there was only a small increase in union
membership, union density was in fact in decline during the period. It is evident then that despite the fact that unions had been legally allowed to organize for the best part of a decade, the movement remained weak. While surveys have indicated that workers, particularly those who regard themselves as skilled, hold generally positive attitudes toward unions and believe that they can protect their interests (Limqueco et.al. 1989:41), the number of those actually joining unions remained miniscule. There are a number of possible explanation for this. First, promoters of unions were not legally protected until after the union was registered; employers were thus able to dismiss would-be organizers with virtual impunity (Supachai et. al. 1984:53). Second, the potential benefits of joining unions may not have been widely understood. Third, the effects of economic structural demobilisation must be taken into account (cf. Turton, 1984:36). Fourth, there continued to be high levels of unemployment throughout the 1980s. This was particularly so in the first half of the 1980s with workers wary of jeopardising their jobs by becoming involved in union activity. Finally, and related to the first point made above, low density also reflects the effectiveness of employer systems of control. Despite formal legal protection workers continued to face the problem of securing recognition with employers resorting to numerous tactics to thwart union organisation such as, the organisation of black-lists, use of probationary employment. In addition both threatened and actual violence continued to play a major role in shaping and restricting the growth of organized labour during the 1980s.

The largest and strongest unions have historically been formed by workers employed in key economic sectors and this pattern remained during the 1980s. Thus, while the movement as a whole remained relatively weak strategically key workers employed mostly in state enterprises (9 out of 10 largest Thai unions were public enterprise unions) were able to further develop their organisations. By serving on various tripartite committees, lobbying leading political figures, staging street rallies and strikes, using the press and the industrial relations machinery state enterprise unionists were able to struggle for the achievement of a number of goals which included: forcing government to recognize basic union rights; to ensure that employers complied with the labour law; to improve pay and conditions; to oppose government privatisation plans; to force government to pass social security legislation and to protest against high levels of unemployment and company retrenchments.

At the present stage of research it is difficult to gauge precisely the degree to which the power of organized labour increased during the 1980s. Some comments may, however, be offered. First, if one examines union organisational strength it is clear that basic grass roots organising was still in its early stages. Most unions are very young; legal restrictions encouraged the proliferation of weak, largely enterprise unions. This problem was not effectively countered through the formation of broader based unions. As employers were increasingly resorting to the hiring of lawyers to help them cope with the complexities of labour law (Mabry 1987:307) unions were effectively being discriminated against since they were not permitted to employ outsiders. While this situation meant that leaders enjoyed a close relationship with the rank and file, union power was
constrained. Weak finances also meant that unions were dependent on larger unions and other organisations for assistance. This then tended to foster a relationship of dependency which further inhibited the ability of unions to develop their own strategy and organisation.

The extent to which unions were able to achieve the goals they set themselves is a further test of their effectiveness. As noted above organized labour pursued a number of goals throughout the 1980s. These included, struggling for basic rights, forcing employers to abide by the law and protesting against unfair labour practices and improving wages and conditions. Given the persistent widespread abuse of labour rights, it seemed that unions failed in what was a principle objective of the 1980s. A similar conclusion can be made with regard to the objective of increasing minimum wages. Although the minimum wage increased over the decade it is estimated that over 50 percent of employers paid less than the legal rate. Moreover, given that research (Limqueco et. al 1989) has found that most of those who did receive the minimum wage claimed that it was insufficient to meet rising costs, it would seem that union activity has been inadequate in this regard having failed to secure a better share of wealth for those they represent. This, however, may not be true of union activity in the public sector where unions pressed their claims most vigorously.

On the positive side unions did make some progress in the political sphere. Since the 1970s organized labour, particularly in Bangkok, has become a major political actor which government has been forced to recognize. Both the government of Prem and, in particular Chartchai were confronted by and forced to alter policies in line with labour's demands. In particular, while not bringing the process of privatisation to a halt, public sector unions were able to slow the process down. The union movement also contributed to the government's decision to introduce social welfare legislation. In addition, unions also contributed to resolving long running disputes such as those of Winner Textiles and GS Steel works. In this sense then, labour's ability to have its voice heard and its opinions included in shaping government decisions further developed during the 1980s.

To summarize briefly. It has been argued that economic and political developments in Thailand encouraged the development of a new phase in relations between state and organized labour. During the 1980s unions were being institutionalized under a set of arrangements where the state guaranteed their three basic rights and labour agreed to keep its activities within the rules of the industrial relations game. This arrangement then lay at the core of what was termed a 'tough yet more flexible attitude toward organized labour' (Limqueco et. al 1989:33). However, while the structures were being erected it was obvious that there was a long way to go before these arrangements were sufficiently robust and legitimate to yield major improvements for employees. Employers frequently violated the law and numerous tactics were employed to limit union organisation. Moreover, elements within the state itself, particularly those within military circles, were not prepared to let the system operate as they tried to infiltrate and influence the process through attempts to control unions, and factions within unions, in order to promote their own interests. Such intervention was particularly apparent, for example, during the months leading up to the abortive coup attempt of September 1985 when elements within the military and certain factions within the
leadership of the Labour Congress of Thailand joined forces in an attempt to destabilize the Prem administration. Nevertheless, from the mid 1980s onward there were signs that the union movement was coming to grips with industrial relations realities and by the end of the 1980s, under the leadership of powerful public sector unions, there seemed to be a determined attempt by most leaders to confine their activities to the genuine promotion of worker's interests.

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Cambodia, Thailand, Australia

Gehan Wijeyewardene

This piece is being written at a time when the prospects for peace in Cambodia look better than they have in the last twenty-five years - since the USA began the bombing of Cambodia to interdict the movement of supplies to the National Liberation Front in Vietnam. (The resolution of the problems caused by the near lynching of Khmer Rouge representatives in Phnom Penh is encouraging, but this morning Khmer rouge forces on the Thai border have complained of being attacked by elite Vietnamese forces.) It is a time when the Left in particular have begun to look to the judgments of history; and not only with regard to Cambodia. A book for the times has recently appeared - published in Bangkok, but directed specifically at analysing the Australian response, with much emphasis on the media, to Cambodia.
I am sure this book will have closer comment from those more qualified than I - and perhaps less constrained by the numerous, disdainful categorizations of those who have dared to comment on or be concerned with Cambodia and the Cambodian tragedies. The passage below is as acidulous as many elsewhere in the book; it is not by the authors, but by Professor Khien Theeravit, Director of the publishing Institute.

Many foreign observers find it opportunistic to fish in this troubled water. They ascend from obscurity to champion the cause of human rights and thus make themselves known to the public. Some others claim to be Cambodian experts. In fact, many of them are unable even to distinguish fact from fiction nor can they dissociate human rights from external aggression. More adventurous ones get fame out of a myriad of exaggerations of falsehoods: producing films, articles, pamphlets etc. Out of sincere ignorance or ulterior motives, they have effectively complicated the conflict, deceived the people, diverted the real issues and consequently prolonged the war. The state of war in Cambodia has - in turn - served to legitimize this handful of activists, and the certain relief organizations behind them, by allowing them to continue their self-proclaimed role as saviours - but at the expense of more Cambodian lives.

It is not, I think, accidental that Professor Khien has consistently supported the Thai military backing of the Khmer Rouge and opposed the Chatichai policy of establishing good relations between the governments in Bangkok and Phnom Penh. This particular division in Thai policy, we hope, will no longer be of much consequence. These facts, however, could be of consequence to Australian readers who may have heard one of the authors, Jefferson Lee, introduced on ABC radio as the author of a book too hot for Australian academic presses to handle, and which therefore had to be published in Thailand.

At one point in the book the authors say that they do not attempt to defend the indefensible - the massacres under the Khmer Rouge - but much of the book seems to be involved, though obliquely, in such a defence. This is not to say that important problems of historical interpretation are not involved. The problem for left-wing commentators - and the left-wing in general - is that support was given to the Khmer Rouge government of Democratic Kampuchea long after, as it turned out, they were engaged in wholesale murder and that this was only brought to an end by the invasion from Vietnam. Supporters of liberation in Indochina were left with the dilemma of either continuing to support a murderous political and military organization or the military invasion of one sovereign state by another. The Thai military were not constrained by such dilemmas.

There were a number of reasons for the stand taken by the Thai military and the governments over which they held considerable influence. The Vietnamese threat was by far the most visible - the great penis-shrinking scare fostered by the popular press and directed against the local Vietnamese community in the late 70s was an example, as was 'yellow rain', which turned out to be pollen shed by swarms of...
bees. Much more important in the long run was the far less visible motivation provided by the vision of asean. The Cambodian issue and its manipulation in international affairs could arguably be claimed to have created the asean we now know. Behind it was the principle of territorial integrity, the defence against chaos that might have been created in the region if claims and counter-claims against each other were allowed to emerge.

I am not clear as to what kind of solution the Thai military and Thai governments before Chatichai saw for Cambodia, though there seems to be no evidence that they had any great disagreement with the China-asean line which won un representation for the Khmer Rouge-led coalition and which was supported for a significant period by the usa. A major theme in the Gunn-Lee book is an attack on the line taken by some left-wingers, but also by many others and identified with the Soviet Union, that the Hun Sen government in Phnom Penh should be recognized and support for the Khmer Rouge should end. One of the prime targets of this attack is John Pilger, whom the authors accuse of being anti-United Nations. I think one has to interpret recent events as a defeat for this (the old Soviet union) line and a victory for the fall-back position in defence of the Khmer Rouge. As long as China and the Thai military supported or held the threat of support for the Khmer Rouge, reconciliation, however distasteful, was the only way for peace in Cambodia. (It may well be that a similar reconciliation with slorc is the only possible answer for Burma. It is certainly of historical interest that the Thai army, having gained their point in Cambodia, shifted their position of support for the Karen insurrection in Burma to support of the slorc generals - and have again carried asean with them.)

The accusation made by Khien in his Preface implies that the anti-Khmer Rouge pro-Hun Sen view has cost Cambodian lives. I would have thought that it is those who gave support and comfort to the Khmer Rouge who should face this accusation. And it is here that Australia appears to have missed a very important chance. In 1981, when Andrew Peacock persuaded the Australian government to remove recognition of the Khmer Rouge-led coalition, the ground was laid for recognition of the Phnom Penh government. The Labor Party National Conference voted for such a policy, but the Hawke government did not carry out the declared policy of the party. It should be remembered that at that time India was the only non-Soviet Union-led-alliance country to recognize the government in Phnom Penh. Australia's recognition would have had great moral influence and may have had enough influence with the usa to have it use its own powers of persuasion to stop China provisioning the Khmer Rouge.

This however is not an issue that will concern many now engaged with ensuring the peace in Cambodia. It may be of concern however in the contemporary assessment of the merit report which has suggested Senator Gareth Evans (and therefore Australia) should be honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize. The question is not whether the peace plan as agreed by the warring parties was first proposed by Norodom Sihanouk or Solarz rather than Gareth Evans, but whether the assessment of significant actions is accurate.2 Gunn and Lee conclude their penultimate chapter:

Whatever the outcome, however, we can say that the movement towards a diplomatic endgame on Cambodia after a decade of impasse has
undoubtedly been the product of a complex evolution of factors, not the least, the end of the Cold War and the enhanced prestige of the United Nations. No less, the triumph of the market socialism model in Vietnam and the overall trend towards dialogue between Vietnam and China and between Vietnam and individual ASEAN countries has facilitated the atmosphere of reconciliation over the Cambodia question. At the same time, we should not deprecate the indefatigable role of the mediators and interlocutors from among the middle powers, notably the Indonesians, the French, the Thai, the Japanese and nonetheless, the Australians. It is in this context that the facilitating role of the Evans initiative should be situated.

This is admirably put (despite the 'nonetheless'), but slides over some difficulties. For instance, some of the 'dialogue' between Vietnam and Singapore was a highly profitable trade for Singapore while strongly arguing against any relaxation of the international boycott of Vietnam.3 The break in the log-jam was largely made possible by the actions of the Chatichai government against the wishes of both the military and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It may be remembered that among the first actions of the coup leaders was to re-affirm their support of the Khmer Rouge and the ASEAN line, but by then the peace process had found a new momentum.

I quote a small section of an interview with Kraisak Choonhavan, the son and adviser to Prime Minister Chatichai:4

Q. In the time that you were on the team of advisers at Ban Phitsanulok, which of the more difficult tasks were you most proud?

A. The task of co-ordinating activities with General Chawalit concerning Cambodia; I am most proud that the team was able to agree with and co-operate very closely with General Chawalit. We were agreed that General Chawalit had the credentials which should make him the next Prime Minister. He had the adroitness and strategic ability to confer with all the Cambodian factions, Japan, America, France. We had not anticipated that the army had a man like this. Our most important objective was the signing of an agreement between Hun Sen and Sihanouk in Tokyo - a result which still stands - it is indeed sad that General Chawalit does not get sufficient credit for his role in this. I am very sorry about that. Do not forget that the first day that Chatichai became Prime Minister he spoke of peace in Cambodia because the army under the leadership of General Chawalit supported this policy - a policy that the whole world was willing to follow. But General Chawalit was not able to make his views known because he was Commander of the Army and at that time he had to preserve the public perception of the army. I think the history of Thailand and of Indochina should note this. However anyone may wish to criticize relations between Laos and Thailand, I say that were it not for General Chawalit there would be no peace with Laos and Cambodia. Nor did he then allow us to criticize some officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which however, we later did. I am now writing about this, giving him credit for the signing of the first agreement between Hun Sen and Sihanouk at Ban Pitsanulok, the second in Tokyo - which was the beginning of the international agreement.

Q. You too should be given credit?
A. I was only the servant, only the one who set out the line of thought. However, the bad dream was that after Tokyo he (Chawalit) should have returned to celebrate in Bangkok, but when he returned there was a disastrous parting of the ways - I am very sorry about this. (The interviewer then moves to ask about Chaleerm Yubamrung, who was involved in the disagreement between Chawalit and the Chatichai government at that time, but the discussion relates to Chaleerm's contemporary problems.)

Kraisak is here muted about Chatichai's own crucial part in the bringing about of an agreement in Cambodia. It is very significant that he involves Chawalit in the credit and relates it to the recent history of Thai relations with Laos. It does not seem sufficiently appreciated in the world outside Southeast Asia that Chawalit was almost personally responsible for the creation of a military peace between Laos and Thailand which was the forerunner of current economic and other relations. In Cambodia, if Chatichai had not forced Hun Sen on the Thai establishment, on asean and the rest of the world, there would not now be any kind of agreement in Cambodia.

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The Reception of Western Medicine in China: Examples from Yunnan

Elisabeth Hsu*

1. Introduction

Much has been written on the European and later mainly American activities that introduced Western medicine into China1. How this foreign practice was perceived and eventually accepted by the Chinese and how these forms of knowledge, grounded in Western science, were transformed by folk belief and practices of traditional professionals, is only mentioned briefly in the available literature. Chinese were probably not interested pointing out how Western medicine was modified, because they wished to stress progress, and foreign advocates of development were likewise not inclined to draw attention to the adulteration of cosmopolitan medicine with local practice.

This paper focuses on the perception and integration of foreign medicine into the existing body of traditional knowledge by presenting snap-shots from Yunnan province in Southwest China. They were taken during three different periods of modern Chinese history: the period of colonial dominance at the end of the Qing dynasty (1840-1911), the nationalist Republican Period (1911-1949) and the period of the socialist People's Republic of China (after 1949). For reporting on 'first encounters' with Western medicine in the first section, passages of missionaries' diaries and surveys after the Communist revolution give valuable, though biased information. The research of the anthropologist F.L.K. Hsu2 has been summarized in the second section and in the third my own observations are presented which were made during fieldwork in Kunming 1988/89.

China was never completely colonized, therefore missionaries remained the main vector of transmission. The missionaries were a most
heterogeneous group of individuals. All they had in common was the backing through the foreigners' overwhelming military, economic and political power. Due to military interventions (1839-42; 1856-60), concessions from the imperial court were obtained which allowed for the penetration of China's hinterland and the propagation of the Christian religion. Catholic missionaries had been establishing the church in China's mainland long before official sanctioning, but Western medicine was disseminated throughout China mainly by the Protestants. For the Protestants, as for the Jesuits of the Peking mission in the 17th century, conversion could also be achieved by means other than preaching: the tools of Protestant conversion which endured in modern China, ironically only after secularisation, were institutions of higher education and Western medicine.

The Protestant home churches were from the very start critical of missionaries engaging in anything other than pastoral work. They often refused to finance supplementary expenditures for educational or medical enterprises as they saw the duties of teachers and doctors as limiting their time for being good evangelists. The more progressive went as far as to suggest a division of labour between pastor and doctor. Only at the end of the century was medical aid accepted as a principal missionary strategy in addition to the five standard ones set up by Ziegenbalg in 1706. It is noteworthy that the medical mission was more successful in China than in India; possibly the Han-Chinese were more responsive to the Protestants' zeal of individual salvation.

Yunnan province was, as its Chinese name 'south of the clouds' suggests, remote from the imperial court and almost inaccessible to the colonialists on the coast, but close to the French in Vietnam and the British in Burma who showed much interest in the 'five treasures' (wu bao) of the province, the gold, silver, copper, lead and zinc mines. In the middle of the 19th century the province was however in upheaval: while the Taiping revolt raged in the lower Yangzi basin (1850-64) and Miao people struggled in Guizhou (1855-72), the Muslims revolted in Yunnan (1856-73). The weak and corrupt dynasty was at its centre supported by the British who helped to crush the Taiping revolt. At its borders, however, in Yunnan, the Muslims found support in the British who were particularly interested in this region between India and the Yangzi for geopolitical reasons. After the Sino-French war (1883-85), the court was obliged to recognize the treaty of 1874 which had made the tributary state Annam (Vietnam) a French protectorate. Burma was annexed by the British in the same year, 1885. When the Russians, Germans and British got their share of China in 1897, the French established a sphere of influence in Eastern Guangdong, Guangxi and Yunnan. In 1895 the French were given a concession for extending the Annam Railway to Yunnan and in 1897 the British were given the same for the Burma-Railway.

With the building of the French railway, completed in 1910, Yunnan was taken out of its inland isolation and further removed from imperial control. It was during that period that vaccination started to be promoted by the consular administration. In order to prevent the spread of epidemics into the Tonkin protectorate, the French military had earlier organized vaccination of the population in the border areas of southern Yunnan. Schools and hospitals as well as mail services were increasingly established with the explicitly stated goal
of reinforcing the French influence in Yunnan. However growing nationalism in the 1920s, the retreat of the Guomindang into the Southwest after the Japanese Invasion (1937-45) and Communist control since 1950 have reinforced its bonds with the Chinese state.

2. Snap-shots of 'First Encounters' with Western Medicine

Western practices of hygiene and medicine may have appeared, first of all, just strange and exotic, as the following passage with reference to children suggests.

The leader of this afternoon's party wants a piece of soap. Now a piece of soap means, of course, one for each and all, so I suggested that she might wash her hands with my soap and basin, both on the low shelf behind us. The desire to be clean is such a laudable one that we must not discourage it, must we? So she prepares to start in, but her hands being innocent of previous washings, she is a little in doubt of the modus operandi. and looks at me inquiringly. There is some lather in the soap-dish and I tell her to use that first whereupon she scraps some up gingerly and spreads it on the back of her left hand - just as you would spread butter on a piece of bread. No, I tell her, she must rub it in, not just spread it on, so she tries again. However, it soon seems evident that a practical demonstration is necessary, so after washing my own hands to show her the approved method, she starts in again. She warms to her work this time, and washes both hands and face with rather more vigour, more splashing. and more blowing than I thought I had included in my demonstration. However, there is nothing like erring on the right side, is there?

Of course by this time all the others have discovered that the thing they desire more than anything else in the world is to wash their hands too.... Of course. they all succeed in getting their sleeves wet up to the elbows, and part of their tunics and dresses too. Moreover. they do not seem as anxious to remove the soap from their hands and faces as they were to put it on.... They finish their hand-washing, as you might guess, by spilling all the water on the floor - a touch of nature! but we will not blame them (quoted in Taylor 1944:200-201).

J. O. Fraser, a missionary of the China Inland Mission (1886-1938), wrote the above passage in a letter from his converts among the Lisu in Western Yunnan15 to his prayer circle in England. The reason for citing it is not to maintain that the Lisu were unhygienic, but to show that at first encounter the meaning of this activity, developed on grounds of scientific discoveries in 19th century Europe, was not recognized by those children. They were curious towards the exotic of the white man and made out of it a game with its own rules.

The passage also throws light on the missionary's perception of the setting. 'He was eminently concerned with the souls of the Chinese and in many cases grew to love the Chinese as people. But this very concern and affection reinforced in him the driving urge to bring light and remove darkness. And this impelled him, almost of necessity, to adopt a critical and intolerant posture toward much of Chinese culture'. Fraser fits Cohen's16 description of the missionary among the Chinese. He was loving while he felt superior, if only because he thought he was more knowledgeable.

As will be shown below, the attitudes between the intruders
and the residents were not always as affectionate as presented above. In view of their unequal power relations, the interpretation of the foreigner's activities was prone to be marked by suspicion. The foreigner, his political power and his medicines were seen in close association.

S. Pollard (1866-1915) from the Wesleyan Methodist church used medicine for providing humanitarian aid on the one hand and generating converts on the other. He preached in the markets, in contrast to the Catholic priests; mostly near Zhaotong in the northeast of Yunnan (between 1887-1915). Unlike Fraser, who was 'in the first, second and third instance' a preacher he inclined to the missionary strategy of medical intervention during the crisis of an illness. 'It came naturally to help' and 'to care for the uncared', with the result that his therapeutic aid was often more sociomedical than medical. It is not co-incidental that the first 'medical case' for which his aid was sought was a 'social case', a woman who attempted suicide by consuming large doses of opium. His medicine was not what Western medicine is nowadays - 'a bottle of mustard, another of sulphate of zinc and a few feathers', but he managed to make her vomit and she recuperated.

Missionaries like Pollard dealt mainly with socio-medical problems which would presumably fall nowadays into the sector of primary health care. Traditionally the gentry had undertaken welfare activities during epidemics, famines and floods; by providing relief work during such crises, the missionaries were challenging their position of prestige and power.

In Yunnan, opium was not only used for consumption by suicidal women, its cultivation for provincial export and the increasing number of addicts had far reaching socio-economic impacts. The poppy field thrust aside the rice paddy; only the well-to-do could eat rice, common people ate maize, and famines were frequent. Moreover, epidemics frequently swept across the province, even more after the severe Muslim uprisings in 1835-40 and 1856-73. On the basis of reports in various annals, 25300 deaths between 1772-1855 were attributed to shuyi, the plague, and almost three times as many, 73300, between 1856-1902.

Pollard became well known for his socio-medical interventions. While Fraser was only suspected of being a secret agent of British imperialism, Pollard was held in awe as a powerful medicine man. If he had good medicines, he also had bad ones; such rumours became more prevalent with his growing influence in and around Zhaotong, after mass conversions of Miao people.

The story goes that a small group of Miao had approached him and thereafter small groups of Miao came continuously from the hills to seek him in town; eager to learn to read in the script Pollard had invented for them, as his biographer puts it. Upon returning to their villages, many were tortured and put into jail. They were accused of learning black magic from a powerful medicine man and urged to hand over the drugs with which they were believed to poison the wells. Metaphorically speaking, the accusation made by the landlords of the Miao, who were themselves mostly Sinicized Yi (Nosu) people, was probably correct. The mass conversions of the Miao were undermining existent power structures.

It was not only the Miao and Yi who attributed magical power
to the foreigner and his practice of medicine. The Han Chinese also had suspicions that the foreigner practised black magic and rumours circulated that he was therefore hunting for 'hearts and eyes'. There had been rumours, as early as during the 18th and possibly even the 17th century that Christians could make silver out of Chinese eyes by means of alchemy. Zhang Zhen-tao (1713-80) expressed the following suspicions:25 'When a Chinese convert was on the verge of death, the Catholic priest came and, covering the convert's head with a piece of cloth, pretended to pronounce the absolution. In reality, however, he secretly made off with the eyes of the dying man. These were then mixed with lead and mercury to create silver,' Zhang offered this as partial explanation for the seemingly unlimited amounts of money which the Catholics had and saw this as a motive for seducing the Chinese into Christianity. The suspicions about the foreigner gouging out eyes must have been reinforced by the widely practised cataract operations in missionary hospitals during the 19th century.26 After photography had been invented, rumours started to circulate that Chinese eyes were used for producing photographs.27

In Africa human blood was said to be used for improving the quality of copper coins,28 in South America human fat for fuelling airplanes.29 The white man suspected 'the other' to be a non-human who practised cannibalism; likewise, he was viewed as 'the other' and suspected of cannibalism. The fact that he was believed to make profits from his cannibalism may be understood as an expression of imperialist exploitation and accumulation of power in the colonized world.

3. Snap-shots from the nationalist Republican Period

Informal interviews (during fieldwork 1988-89) with about a dozen aged inhabitants in Kunming threw some light on the situation of their youth before and during the Second World War. They indicated that Western medicine was practised in Kunming, by foreigners and Chinese doctors but that it was generally ignored.

When talking about Western medical services they often referred to missionaries. This might indicate that during the time of the Republic missionaries offered more medical care in Kunming at the grass-roots level than the government did. The first hospitals had been built at the beginning of the 20th century, but they were in the first instance installed for professional groups; the first one, built by the French in 1901, was mainly for the French railway builders, the one installed in 1908 by the Qing court was for the military and in 1914 the head of police funded a third one for the police force (installed in a temple).30

Few of the people I talked to remembered visits to the missionaries' clinics, except in cases of very specific diseases such as tuberculosis. They remembered that resorting to Western medicine had been too expensive and they were under the impression that only converts had been exempted from fees. Some remarks even suggested that in certain families there was no such condition as 'sick enough even to try papalangi medicine'.31 It seems that Western medicine was offered, but hardly used by the Chinese in Kunming.

In his thesis Magic and Science in Western Yunnan (1943) F.L.K. Hsu came to similar conclusions after investigating how a community dealt with a cholera epidemic. He described the locality,
Westtown, as a 'small village or town' with a population of about 8000 people in 1000 households (p.3). It seems that, apart from a 'few native dispensaries', there were two major stations of Western medical health care in town. One was the "infirmary of the missionary college' with a foreign doctor in charge, an American surgeon who had graduated from the Harvard Medical School and who was a medical missionary of the American Episcopal Church; the other was the government 'local hospital' with a Chinese M.D. who had graduated in a provincial medical college and a nurse trained in the Peiping Union Medical College (p.29).

Once the first two cholera cases had been hospitalized, the missionary college authorities urged their students and faculty members to take anti-cholera injections, but the general populace took little notice of these precautions. After a certain delay, prayer meetings where Daoist or Buddhist adepts read scriptures and recited incantations were held at various localities, almost daily in town and in the surrounding villages. Their purpose was, as a priest explained: '... to invoke the mercy of the superior deities who would require the Wen god [god of epidemics] to retract the Wen spirits which he had let loose earlier on' (p. 15).

These meetings were conscientiously attended and financed by the community members, but in contrast to the priest, most did not have a clear explanation for their actions. Some knew that they were expelling spirits while many simply commented that they were doing a good deed and that it had always been done in this way. Simultaneously, they resorted to other traditional methods for overcoming the epidemic, such as drinking 'fairy' water (fangshui?), taking traditional drugs etc., with the result that some who had observed the varying efficacy of those drugs came to the conclusion that survival was a matter of fate, and not of medical treatment.

The attitude of the community members as detailed above, suggests that there was little incentive to search for new measures to combat the epidemic. The government poster pleading for hygienic behaviour and assuring people of the absolute efficacy of the anti-cholera injections was one option among many others, with the disadvantage of being new and foreign, propagated by outsiders. Only few, mainly children and a very small number of women, took the injection and those who took it had also taken part in the prayer meetings. It was permissible to worship many gods and there was a saying 'the more, the better'.

The Western doctors condemned the activities of the community as superstition (p.29) while their own precautions appeared just as nonsensical and superstitious to many Chinese. Hsu was, nevertheless, convinced that eventually the modern injection would '... in the minds of the local people. be ranked side by side with the prayer meetings, the many native prescriptions, the food taboos etc. and that [it would] be carried out and received in the traditional manner and not in that of the modern ways of science' (p.39).

4. Snap-shots from the PRC

Tian (1987) claims that since the Communist revolution, cholera epidemics have not occurred in Yunnan province; the exception in 1964 was kept under control (no deaths). Shuyi, the plague, is said to have occurred for the last time in 1956, and malaria was allegedly
also brought under control in the fifties. Western medicine, in combination with socialist control, is believed to have proved its efficacy. The foreigners were expelled in the fifties while the medicine they had earlier introduced to the country was promoted by the Chinese themselves. This certainly facilitated the acceptance of Western medicine which is nowadays widely practised and taught. Hospitals are reasonably clean, and though medical treatment has a Chinese touch, it generally does not differ much from that in Western countries.

There are, however, a few examples of Western medical care in China where the foreign practice has been significantly modified by the matrix of folk belief and the practices of traditional professionals into which it was implanted. In the rural areas and to a lesser extent in the cities, it is a widespread practice to give intravenous infusions of glucose to patients who suffer from complaints of general weakness and fatigue. A peasant, for instance, may go once or twice a week in the evening to the village hospital to receive an intravenous infusion and continue to work in the fields on subsequent days. A European who expects only to find patients with metabolic deficiencies or those in intensive care attached to a drip, is slightly surprised to see that intravenous infusions belong to the repertoire of outpatient health care in China.

The patient's condition is labelled pi xu and indicates weakness and fatigue, often associated with poor blood conditions. In literal translation it means 'emptiness of the spleen'. As an expression of traditional Chinese medicine it offers a standardized description of the patient's condition by referring to physiological processes in the body: The spleen (pi) is one of the five visceral organs (wuzang), located in the centre of them; the stomach (wei) is one of the six bowels (liufu) and functions as part of the digestive system. Spleen and stomach are closely allied to each other in an 'inner-outer' relation (biaoli guanxi). The ingestion of food is a function of the bowels, but the transformation of the nutrients into blood is controlled by the spleen. Just as the earth may be understood as the mother of life in the macrocosm, the spleen and blood nurtures the microcosm of the human body. The general well-being of a person depends very much on the condition of the spleen. General weakness and fatigue are symptoms, then, of insufficient nutrition. How clever to take the shortcut of nourishing the blood Ñ not by oral intake, but by intravenous infusion!

A doctor at a hospital in Kunming city suffered from chronic stomach ulcers. In view of her occupational and domestic responsibilities there was little doubt that they were stress-induced. At the outpatient acupuncture clinic she was the right hand of the clinic director who treated 50-70 patients on every other day. She was in charge of an untrained group of students and responsible for an accurate record of the patients' treatment. She was also expected to have an ear for their complaints. At home, she was mother and housewife. She was completely overworked, had bags under her eyes and announced once in a while that she had found blood in her stool. The stomach ulcer had induced symptoms which were in terms of Chinese medicine typical of an 'empty and cold spleen and stomach' (piwei xu han) To me, her health was in an alarming state and I urged her to ask for sick leave. She acknowledged my concern with a sad smile. She was
not very explicit about her motives for continuing work, but her sparse comments indicated that the time of the iron rice bowl belonged to the past. In striving for the economic reform of the eighties, the acupuncture department had signed a contract with the hospital authorities which allowed for more self-determination but less social security (chengbao).

She used to be attached to the drip during lunch time. In response to my question why she preferred the drip to other therapies, she said: 'The drip has rapid effects'. 'Western medicine has rapid effects (xiyi liao xiao kuai)', I echoed, reminded of the widespread opinion about modern Western medicine. She nodded. The modern medicine is believed to effect rapid changes. It is ascribed the characteristics of technological inventions which speed up the pace of life. Since modern (Western) medicine and traditional (Chinese) medicine are both considered scientific, she was simultaneously taking Chinese medical drugs for invigorating the 'empty spleen'. 'Western medicine cures the symptoms, but Chinese medicine cures the underlying cause of illness (xiyi zhi biao, zhongyi zhi ben)'.34 The above phrases of folk belief about Western and Chinese medicine show that one admits the efficacy of modern science and technology without ascribing to it the capacity of solving the underlying problems. Intravenous infusions are of symptomatic use while the drug therapy is effective in the long-term because it focuses on the underlying 'cause'.

Nutritional aspects of well-being are central to Chinese culture. In Chinese medicine, for instance, the school based on principles of Li Dongyuan's Discussion of the Spleen and Stomach (piweilun, 1249 A.D.), which stresses the spleen and its nutritional functions, has remained one of the most influential ones since its formation in the Song dynasty (960-1297). It may therefore not be astonishing to find practices of Western medicine modified in favour of nutritional considerations. For treating diarrhoea, for instance, all kinds of contradictory biomedical therapies have been in fashion in the West. A symptom like diarrhoea for which Western biomedicine does not provide standard treatments, is more susceptible to be treated by grandma's home recipe or, in China, to be modified by the principles of the traditional medicine.

Almost every tourist in China experiences diarrhoea. A doctor of traditional Chinese medicine writes a recipe for him which consists of many different herbs; a doctor of Western medicine, prescriptions of many different kinds of pills. The tourist, somewhat perplexed, asks for an explanation. First, so he is told, there are sulfonamids Ñ they kill off the bacteria. Then, other pills such as painkillers or antihelminthica may be added, according to the particular condition of the patient. Finally, vitamins are included, usually vitamin B and C. Vitamin B (B1 or B6), a doctor at Yunnan's first provincial hospital once explained, because it had neutralising effects on the stomach; its main function was to restore the intestinal flora of bacteria. At other instances, 'vitamin B nurtures the nerves' was the answer. 'Didn't you just say you felt quite weak and tired?' This attention given to the condition of the patient in its entirety, suggests the influence of traditional Chinese patterns of thought.

On closer inspection the prescription of these Western drugs seems to be guided by a principle of traditional Chinese medicine:
'destroy and build up simultaneously' (gong-bu-lian-shi). Common knowledge of Western medicine is familiar with the idea of killing bacteria, but the emphasis on nurture is particular to Western medical curative practice in China.

5. Summary

The examples presented above are snap-shots from different periods and various regions of Yunnan province. Exemplary as they are, they show different kinds of attitudes to the foreigner's medicine; whether they are exemplary for their historical period still needs further research. In other words, no claim to have described stages of a historical process is made, rather, important factors which modified a practice grounded in Western science are highlighted.

In the 19th century, the missionaries who introduced foreign medicine into Yunnan were all backed by colonialist power and wealth. The medical knowledge they brought was not always acknowledged for its therapeutic effects. Their hygienic habits were utterly strange and as the stranger, 'the other', they were suspected of cannibalism. Frequently, the political power as an attribute of the person, was extended by attributing magical power to his medicines.

In Westtown of the 1940s, Western medicine had been practised for several decades. It was, however, generally ignored during the cholera epidemic. Belief in traditional customs did not require it while belief in the government, the foreigner and Westernized Chinese did. 'It is too painful', the frequent excuse for refusing to take the anti-cholera injections, expressed distrust and appealed to one's own sovereignty. Factors which allowed for acceptance of the foreign practices may be found in the tolerance of worshipping many gods in Chinese society and the folk belief of 'the more, the better'. During this period of nationalism, Western medicine was not recognized as scientific, but as the foreigner's medicine.

In the People's Republic of the eighties, Western medicine is more widely practised and the belief in its efficacy is well-established in the cities. Chinese and Western medicine are both considered scientific; in contrast to the traditional Chinese medicine, modern Western medicine is ascribed the characteristics of modern technology and believed to cause rapid changes. The examples from the Western medical clinic concern reasoning on physiological processes and illustrate how the imported practice of medicine can be modified by indigenous patterns of thought.

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Dehong Tai and Standard Thai Tone Contrast

Orawan Poo-Israkij and Luo Yongxian
[This paper is a result of the visit to the ANU of Professor Wu Ling-yun, of the Kunming Institute of Nationalities, arranged through the Thai-Yunnan Project and Dr Anthony Diller of the National Thai Studies Centre]

Dehong Tones
Standard Thai Tones

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*Tone 24 in this category occurs in the environment __/V [+short].

Examples:

Thai    Dehong    Thai    Dehong

Tone A
to sell kha:j24 xa:i24 rain fon24 fon24
year pi:33 pi33 to eat kin33 kin33
month dbuan33 l’n33 to take ðaw33 ðau33
rice field na:33 la53 day wan33 van53
Tone B
to split pha:11 pha11 chicken kaj11 kai11
full ðim11 ðim11 shoulder ba:11 ma11
father phé:41 po33 mother mä:41 me33
to sit naµ41 laµ33 pangolin lin41 lin33
Tone C
five ha:41 ha31 to erect taµ41 taµ31
aunt pa:41 pa31 nine kaw41 kau31
face na:41 la31 village ba:n41 ma:n31
stomach thé:µ55 téµ43 water nam55 lam43
horse ma:55 ma43
Tone DS
vegetables phak11 phak24 ripe, cooked suk11 suk24
heavy nak11 lak24 six hok11 hok11
ten sip11 cip24 to shut hap11 hap24
seven ðet11 tset11 duck pet11 pet11
raw dip11 lip24 chest ðok11 ðok11
bird nok55 lok43 to love rak55 hak43
to wash clothes sak55 sak43
Tone DL
to be broken kha:t11 xa:t11 to carry on a pole ha:p11 ha:p11
mouth pa:k11 pa:k11 sunshine dâ:t11 lâ:t11
to go out ðé:k11 ðé:k11 root ra:k41 ha:k43
rope ðchÞuak41 ts”k43 outside né:k41 lè:k43
stable; pen khê:k41 xê:k43

The Opium Trade: A Kokang Perspective
In 1971 President Nixon in his address to Congress declared a war on drugs. This was in response to the growing concern over the drug menace, hitherto confined to the black ghettos, that has now spread to middle class America; factories, offices and the armed forces. In 1799 a Chinese edict was issued banning the sale of opium for the same reason: "The use of opium originally prevailed only among vagrants and disreputable persons, who occasionally associated together for the purpose of partaking of this substance, but has since extended itself among the Members and descendants of respectable Families, students and Officers of Government, many of whom are so infatuated in their attachment to this drug, as to make an habitual use of it. Being now desirous of opposing this growing evil for which it appeared necessary to revert to the sources whence it sprang, We discover by a careful investigation that the article of opium is imported by Foreigners, and gains admittance into the Empire through the Bocca Tigris, either by the Pilot Vessels and armed guard-boats that are stationed there, it is conveyed up the river Shen Shin (Dane's Island) or, by means of small craft it is landed by degrees at Macao and thence conveyed privately to the Capital, while Custom House Officers and guards at the different stations, though well acquainted with the transaction, suffer it to pass without examination or enquiry, being doubtlessly bribed to a large amount for that purpose."

It is interesting to note that many fortunes were founded on opium in the nineteenth century by British merchants in Hong Kong. Warren Delano, a partner in Russell and Co., who was Franklin D. Roosevelt's maternal grandfather, dealt in opium. These are protagonists of another era.

Twenty years after Nixon's declaration, the drug flow into the United States has not diminished. The United State's drug enforcement effort has been directed at the few individuals who were allegedly controlling the drug trail. The argument is that if these few individuals were to be apprehended, the drugs would cease to enter the country.

This has not occurred. The drug issue, which involves its production, trafficking and sale, has become immensely complex. Its production is linked to socio-political factors which until recently have largely been ignored. Its trafficking involves corrupt officials and international syndicates controlling billions of dollars. A war against the drug trade needs to crack this complex labyrinth of wheeling and dealing across international boundaries.

The focus today is on Asia and in particular, Burma. The US State Department reported that Burma is the 'largest producer of illicit opium and exporter of opium-based narcotics'. It went on to say that the areas under cultivation are isolated and not under the central government's control. If such is the case, how the State Department arrived at the above conclusions is a matter of contention. As there has not been any research or study made of the areas in question mainly due to inaccessibility, statistics relating to opium production cannot be reliable. For example, western narcotics officials were quoted in the Far Eastern Economic Review of 28 June 1990 as saying that the opium production of 1988-1989 in the areas of
Thailand, Burma and Laos has doubled to 2400 tonnes from the 1200 tonnes of the previous year. 2000 tonnes were supposed to have come from Burma. For the same period, US Ambassador Daniel O'Donahue was quoted in The Washington Times as saying that Burma produced 1200 to 1400 tonnes. These conflicting figures reveal that the sources from which they are derived may at best be considered doubtful. This observation is confirmed by Bertil Lintner (in Land of Jade:217) who aptly described the quality of some of the narcotics officials as follows:

"Foreign officials sat in air conditioned offices in Bangkok and Rangoon with little experience of, or feel for local conditions. Their information depended largely on official contacts with their host countries, who had their axes to grind, and reports from local informers less interested in the War on Drugs than in making a quick dollar supplying dubious intelligence that foreigners had no means of cross-checking. And on these uncertain foundations, conclusions were reached and grand strategies drawn up."

Socio-political Factors Affecting Production

It was to address the balance of trade that Europeans introduced opium to an unwilling China which led to the Opium War of 1839. As the number of addicts grew in China, the cultivation spread to adjacent areas such as the eastern parts of the Shan States. It is likely that poppies may have been cultivated in these areas in the mid-nineteenth century. The ecological and climatic conditions seem to favour the cultivation of poppy and since very little rice can be grown the villagers therefore rely on opium as a cash crop for their livelihood. For this reason, until 1962, the cultivation of opium was legal east of the Salween. For many years opium was grown to assure self sufficiency and was the mainstay of the village economy.

These regions remained remote and inaccessible, and were of minimal interest to the government. As a result, the land remained underdeveloped and the people extremely poor, being forced to rely on limited resources for development. Today these areas are still poor, having endured thirty years of war. A whole generation has grown up without proper education; ninety percent of the population remains illiterate. There are no basic facilities such as running water, electricity or paved roads. Hospitals and schools are almost non-existent. This confirms the fact that growers do not benefit from the drug trade. It is those who deal in the refined derivatives of opium that obtain maximum benefit.

While opium was cultivated for subsistence prior to 1962, its production changed dramatically thereafter. To understand this, the role of the Burmese army needs to be examined. At first, the army's presence was required to deal with the Burmese communists following independence in 1948. Later, in the early 1950s, the KMT incursion again called for the assistance of the army. While dealing with these problems in the Shan States, the army's conduct was generally considered reprehensible. Reports of misconduct, rape, torture and murder of innocent civilians became all too frequent. Throughout history, Shan-Burman relations can be described as tumultuous. The Burmans were perceived by the Shans as aggressive and were bitterly resented. At the outset of independence, the surge of Burmese nationalism prompted the central government to embark on the process
of nation-building through Burmanisation of the minorities. This process alienated the Shans and other minorities who feared that their languages and cultures were threatened and their identities eroded in the long run. The Burmese army's conduct in the Shan States aggravated the situation. The minorities have been victims of human rights abuse for decades and only in 1988, Amnesty International documented the extra-judicial execution of its members. In addition, the constitution of 1948, which was federal in form, had strong unitary features which did not fulfil the minorities' desire for autonomy. The positions of the States were further weakened by the 1974 constitution.

In response to the army's brutalities, many patriotic Shans went underground and resorted to force to achieve their objectives. The minorities have publicly declared that they favour a loose federal union giving them higher degrees of autonomy and a political solution to the armed conflict.

When the government of Ne Win seized power in 1962, it set up militias or Ka Kwe Ye, to counter the various armed resistance movements then mushrooming in the Shan States. Unable or reluctant to render any financial support to the militias, their commanders, including Lo Hsin Han and Khun Sa, were allowed to trade in opium to support their units. Without the support of the government this duo would not have achieved the notoriety they have today. Previously, opium was transported by mule caravan in a long hazardous journey through the jungle which took months. Between 1968 and 1970 with the tacit consent of the government roads under its control were made available to ship both opium and contraband goods. Lo Hsin Han's men worked very closely with the Burma Airways pilots and it cannot be discounted that the Burmese planes were employed for the same purpose. At the same time demand was rising in the West, perhaps spurred on by the hippie movement. In Vietnam, the 500,000 troops became increasingly frustrated with the war and it was estimated that ten to fifteen percent of the GIs were addicted to heroin providing a captive market for the enterprising traffickers. The production of opium quickly grew into a worldwide industry. Those who did not grow opium for subsistence did so as a viable economic proposition.

The discovery of the means of making a quick buck against the background of the deteriorating Burmese economy accelerated the trade immensely. By 1965 all the industries and commercial establishments were nationalized, giving rise to an acute shortage of consumer goods. The emergence of the black market was mainly due to the military's gross mismanagement of the economy. Saleable goods were carried by mule caravans across the Burma/Thai border and returned with much needed consumer items. The ethnic minorities fighting against Rangoon also took up the black market trade to support their troops. As their army grew larger, some groups were forced to rely on the opium trade.

The production of opium is inextricably linked to the political conflict between the Burmese army and the minorities. It can no longer be an internal affair of Burma given its international implications. While recognising the reasons for the production increase, Western governments have yet to make any constructive move to resolve the arms conflict. Until 1988, the US, for example, funded the military junta with helicopters and herbicides which were used against the growers. This arose out of the perception that the so-called insurgents were of no political consequence and were
trafficking in drugs. This results in a Catch 22 situation. The Burmese army's use of force will continue to push the ethnic minorities into dependence on opium to support their armed struggle.

In March 1989 Kokang leaders broke away from the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). A very displeased China cut off its aid in the form of arms and supplies. Kokang's economy, which depended on the largesse of China, was in jeopardy. Furthermore, the Kokang forces had grown from a mere 200 in the 1960s to thousands. Feeding these troops was a real concern to the CPB faction. It was precisely at this time that SLORC sent its intermediaries with the offer of US$10 million in development as a gesture of goodwill. On the part of SLORC, civil unrest was simmering in the Burmese heartland. It greatly feared that the student elements would link up with the ex-CPB troops, a combination which would provide a formidable challenge to SLORC. Deploying additional troops to the northeast of Burma was something the SLORC could ill afford under the circumstances. Kokang accepted the offer and a truce was called.

The SLORC has embarked on a six-year plan to reduce opium production by crop substitution, livestock breeding and cottage industries. In the first year 1500 acres which yield 6.6 tonnes were to be destroyed. Already there were signs of difficulties. A recent report in the Bangkok Post indicated that an unprecedented number of Kokang Chinese have crossed into Thailand and China in search of work to avoid starvation. This was due to the military junta's failure to provide adequate supplies and food. It is clear that long term comprehensive plans are required to assist the villagers to make the transition to crop substitution.

Many observers have come to acknowledge that policies to curb demand must be in place in the war on drugs. Crop destruction is only half of the strategy. The opium habit was swept away by totalitarianism in China, but the battle may be a long and hard one for the West.

Author's note:
In the writing of this article I wish to acknowledge comments and suggestions from Prof. A. Wittenborn and Dr Gehan Wijeyewardene. Any shortcomings or errors are entirely my own.

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Casimir Makes a Stand

Gehan Wijeyewardene

[This short piece was written in November 1984 (in fact, in the lobby of the Strand Hotel while waiting news of a delayed plane which would take us to Bangkok) and is only minimally altered. News of the hotel's likely renovation (Far Eastern Economic Review 18 July 1991) has prompted me to submit it to the Newsletter for publication. The piece is as much a mark of my own naiveté as it is a vignette of the Strand. All of us outside Burma have learned much since August 1988 and the elections of last year.]

If you wonder why the waiters at the Strand wear thick black boots, sit in the bar long enough and you will find out. The Strand
Hotel is about a hundred and fifty years old and the bar is a long, high-ceilinged hall with fans which turn ineffectually or not at all.

It closes at nine, but this does not prevent its regulars from pouring down their throats a large quantity of rum and beer. There seemed to be three categories of customer; tourists, who did not seem to use the bar much - prices were high at the official rate of exchange, and the beer was dreadful; the Indian merchants, some of whom managed to consume vast amounts of alcohol in the few hours drinking they had; and the Burmese, who it seems were mostly public servants from nearby government offices.

I had not intended spending time in Rangoon. I was in Burma for five days, mainly because of the exigencies of a Thai visa. I had hoped to go south to the old British capital of Moulmein. My interest in Moulmein is another story; unfortunately the Burmese government had declared the town out of bounds for foreigners, the town being then surrounded by areas affected by the Karen rebellion. Most tourists found their way to Mandalay and Pagan, but I had no intention of rushing around upper Burma looking at pagodas, and there was little else that could be done in four or five days; so I spent a rather resentful few days in Rangoon, mostly at the bar of the Strand.

Despite the dedicated drinking around me, I saw only two drunks, and the first taught me about the black boots. It was a party of four young people, public servants, presumably, two men and two very beautiful girls. The latter were dressed in similar Burmese dress, clearly a uniform. One of the girls was already very drunk by four o'clock; the group must have been there since lunch. She kept ordering fresh drinks and knocking glasses over, but still was able to get quite enough into her. She slumped on to the table, and out of her chair onto the floor, and finally threw up. Only her girl friend showed any real concern. She still did not want to leave, but her friends dragged her away. The waiters cleared the table, straightened the chairs but seemed entirely oblivious of the mess on the floor. That is, until it became quite apparent that they were deliberately walking through the mess. In half an hour there was no sign of it.

The other drunk was Casimir. It was the evening after the full moon in November, the festival of lights, but that could not have been what he was celebrating. At 6.30 p.m. when I entered the bar, he was already pretty drunk. He was with another man who kept smiling and spitting. They were drinking a mixture of Mandalay Rum and Mandalay Beer. Though the latter is pretty weak and tasteless, the rum is potent. Casimir made a feeble attempt to pick up the one pretty tourist in the hotel, but she dismissed him with a pitying smile. He was not in the least abashed. He got up to go to the toilet, and on his way recognizing me as a stranger, made brief casual conversation. Shortly after his companion left and he came and sat at my table.

'My name is Casimir Lim.' He announced. 'My Saint's day is the fourth of March.' Casimir really was his name, and he was a Christian. To satisfy my curiosity I was later to look him up. Casimir of Poland, martyred 1484, the son of King Casimir, he never occupied the throne himself and died at the age of twenty-three of a lung disease aggravated by his ascetic mode of life. His day is the fourth of March.

He, the Burmese Casimir, said he owned a small factory which made plastic bags, and he pulled one out of his shirt pocket to show
me. There was a lot of competition. Business was bad. The state factory produced the crude plastic and the private companies refined it and turned it into bags.

There was not much conversation. He kept saying how glad he was that I was enjoying his country, and how sorry he was about Indira Gandhi's death. It was a few days after her assassination. Two young Burmese who had been drinking at the bar walked past, and he called out to them. They returned his greeting, but did not stop.

'Customs officials,' he said. The next one he greeted did stop; a small squat man who turned out to be with the Bureau of State Investigations. I had seen the board on the building next door to the hotel. Maung Lay was his name. They seemed to know each other quite well. It turned out they had been contemporaries at Rangoon University, Casimir had majored in economics and Maung Lay in psychology. The latter's English was quite good, but he had great muscular difficulty in producing English sounds, a phenomenon the Thai refer to as 'tiredness of the mouth'.

Casimir ordered drinks, and Maung Lay was soon telling me how much he liked the taste of whisky and brandy. Maung Lay seemed a dissatisfied man. Rather surprisingly (he was after all a cop in charge of state security) he expressed an overwhelming desire to get out of Burma. He was even willing to do volunteer work for the United Nations, anywhere, in Asia, in Africa. He kept asking if his qualifications were sufficient. Even had I known what his qualifications were, apart from police experience and a degree in psychology, it was hardly a question I could answer. Sadly, I wondered how much of this there was behind the self-contained beauty of all those men and women one saw on the streets of Rangoon.

The drinks came, and he went back to the easier topic of whisky and brandy. Whisky, he said, he preferred to brandy. The Burmese did make some kind of malt whisky, which actually tasted very good, but was impossibly expensive. I said I had a bottle of duty-free whisky in my room, still half full. It was Glenfiddich.

'We can't drink it here,' he said.

So we set out to find somewhere else. Casimir and Maung Lay knew where they wanted to go. We walked. It was not far, but Casimir was very drunk, and I had a touch of gout. Casimir was a big man and he put most of his heavily muscled weight on my shoulder. I was glad when we got to the restaurant. It was a small Chinese-run establishment, with apparently only four tables. We were lucky, one had just been vacated. The others were all occupied.

Maung Lay ordered ice and soda - and crabs. They were spiced and baked in their shells, like the Thai dish known as pu cha, but this was by far the most delicious crab I have ever eaten. We ate it with a pickle of raw garlic and green chillies. Casimir soon knocked his whisky into the pickle, but mercifully the crab was spared.

The level in the bottle of Glenfiddich sank fast - most of it into my glass. Casimir was being host, and I was not going to leave good malt, so it was likely to be a heavy night.

The conversation was a blur. Though I do remember that at one stage of the evening Maung Lay was talking about 'men's business, between men', and I realized he was offering to take me to a brothel. I said I didn't think there were such things in Burma. It was indeed strange. The Indian taxi drivers and touts seemed only interested in
buying your cigarettes and liquor and arranging complicated deals
buying Burmese cigars for dollars from the state-run stores, and the
nearest thing I saw to a pimp was a security cop.

We had finished eating when I realized that things had been
happening. Maung Lay was talking animatedly to a big,
important-looking man of about fifty. The latter seemed upset, and
became even more upset when Casimir began yelling and tried to get up
from the table. Luckily, as it turned out, he was wedged between the
wall, the table and my chair. The one other table then occupied was by
a party of Indians, and one of them, taking pity on my patent lack of
comprehension, came up and explained that Casimir had made an
insulting gesture to one of those seated at the other table, a small,
intense-looking man in glasses.

'You don't get involved, it is not your business,' the Indian
said as he returned to his own table.

If Casimir had not been insulting before, by the tone of his
voice he was certainly being so now. The young man in spectacles
responded. He stood up in a rage, screaming back. Then stood still for
a moment, picked up his glass and deliberately smashed it on the
table. Maung Lay and I could scarcely keep Casimir in his seat.
Actually it was perhaps the lack of room and the excess of alcohol
that kept him down, rather than our feeble efforts.

The crisis came and passed as quickly. A few minutes later
Casimir was persuaded to shake hands, first with the big,
important-looking man, then with the small one in glasses.

Casimir called for the bill, and kept insisting that Maung Lay
pay. He seemed hesitant as he took his wallet out of his shoulder bag.
When I paid, he said with great relief, 'I have only thirty kyats.'
Four dollars at the official rate of exchange, under two on the
blackmarket. The bill was just over sixty, eight dollars, at the worst
possible rate of exchange. The crab was just about worth the trip to
Burma.

The bottle of whisky had about four fingers of Glenfiddich
still in it, and Casimir picked it up as we prepared to leave. The
other party was leaving at the same time, and as we got to the door,
it happened that Maung Lay and I were on the street while Casimir was
still at the entrance, now surrounded by the members of the other
party. Presumably someone threw some remark at Casimir. He halted
dramatically at the top of the steps of the restaurant, and suddenly,
he seemed exceedingly tall. He unscrewed the cap of the bottle, tipped
back his head, and poured the whisky down his throat in a single
stream. Then, just as quickly, he brought his head forward and spat it
all out onto the steps. But he had not finished yet. He lifted the
bottle over his head and slammed it into the middle of the street. The
bottle broke, but did not smash, and the large intact part bounced
like a short-pitched cricket ball and flew through the open door of
the house opposite, just missing a woman carrying a child who had been
standing in the doorway watching the goings-on across the road. She
jumped back in terror and the child howled. As if it were part of a
single mechanism, a moment later a man shot out of the door,
presumably intent on demanding immediate restitution for the
unwarranted disturbance of his domestic peace. But those he accosted
were a group of three or four others standing in the middle of the
street, who had nothing to do with Casimir. These bystanders seemed to
lose patience very soon, but we did not stay to see what happened. With Casimir's arm again round my shoulders, we were well on our way back to the hotel.

It was not yet all over. Maung Lay tried to put Casimir into a taxi, but he refused, apparently saying he had to see me back to the hotel. Maung Lay left us. At the hotel I tried to persuade Casimir to get into a cycle-car or a taxi, but he was not having any of that. A big Indian, probably a watchman at the hotel, was suddenly by my side, wanting to know what was going on. He still had a couple of lessons to teach me. Casimir refusing my attempts to find him transport, rushed across the road and fell sprawling. The evening was still early and there was traffic on the road. In an attempt to get him out of the way, but quite unable to lift him, I tried to pull him to the pavement. The Indian shouted, 'Don't drag, don't drag.' I should have known. The tarmac would have lacerated him through the thin cotton clothes he was wearing.

When he finally got across the road, he had no difficulty organizing a bicycle-car for himself. I tried to cross the road, with no clear thought, except to say goodbye. The Indian shouted again, 'No, don't. Go, leave him alone.' Of course, it was I who was causing the trouble. He would find his own transport without any help from a foreigner.

I did not see either of them again, though we had arranged to meet the next day. I was disappointed they did not come, but could well understand any reluctance they may have felt. I was grateful for their company, the wonderful crab, and the memory of that mad, melodramatic gesture.

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Some Issues of Vietnamese Supernaturalism
Thi сент ё

Vietnamese supernaturalism refers herein to the 'folk religion' that can be identified by the propitiation of spirits and deities in the following groups:

1. The tutelary or guardian spirits Ð either originally worshipped by the villagers or instituted by Vietnamese or Chinese rulers throughout history: they include the national founding Patriarch, past heroes and heroines, able ministers.
2. The Nature Spirits of the grottos, rocks and trees, rivers and oceans.
3. Nсоо Trо Trвнг (The 'Inner School') with the Lady Lý ёнх and Affiliates.
4. The 'Outer School' with Chinese-adopted Daoist Immortals, e.g. Lao Tse, the 'Mandarin' Snakes, the Five Tigers (Agents), etc.
5. Deities of Cham and Khmer origin.

These groups are worshipped throughout the country. This list, with a rough indication of their 'ethnic origin', is only tentative. There are in addition the millenarian groups, the Bahai, Buddhist, Christian and Islamic communities, whose divinities may also be worshipped by those outside the specific group. To a lesser extent, so
are the founding patriarchs of the crafts, the Good Fortune and Kitchen gods and the domestic ancestors. To find out how they came about and the status of each deity in conceived hierarchies of power and efficacy is not an easy task. Their birth, transformation and maybe disappearance however are instrumental to an understanding of the changing socio-economic and political relations in Vietnamese society at different points in history. Below are some notes toward a thesis proposal, with an initial focus on a few inter-related aspects of supernaturalism.1

Supernaturalism and History

In his anthropological study of Buddhism and spirit cults in Northeast Thailand, Tambiah elects to use history in a piecemeal manner to contextualize some disparate aspects of present 'village religion'. This approach perhaps attests to the widespread view that for Southeast Asia at least, the historians' descriptions are pieces of an incomplete mosaic. And that view may be well justified for the early part of Vietnam's history. Most details of the period up to the tenth century have to be gleaned from Chinese records and built up from archaeological findings. A laborious reconstruction has enabled the historians of Hanoi to maintain that the 'Asiatic Mode of Production' characterized ancient Viet society, where independent self-sufficient villages were under central rule by the Court.

The features of this rule however vary somewhat with the different viewpoints or focuses. The eleventh century LO(y,«) dynasty for instance, Sakurai contends, was a 'shamanistic rather than law-based' regime, because for one thing there existed no hydraulic works to necessitate a bureaucratic machinery to administer the kingdom (Taylor 1988). The polity during the LO(y,«) rule was mainly organized through what Taylor terms the 'LO(y,«) dynastic religion'. Thus popular supernatural practices were marshalled by the Court's ideology into a centralizing force to legitimize and maintain dynastic power.

Reading between the lines, Wolters discerns an enduring tension between what he calls the two subcultures, one of the Court leadership and the other of the villages. As men of prowess from the villages must constantly pose a threat to the ruling class, to the task of governing must be added the appeal for those capable villagers to join the service of the king. And non-secular means were part of the strategy (Wolters 1988:xxv).

But how much can history say about the religio-social life of the villagers when they were not outwardly contesting central power? And when we refer to the past, how far back in the stream of time do we need to go to render a present event adequately meaningful? TO(a,á) Ch' ¶O(a,á)i Tr‘O(¿,`)ng (1989) highlights cultural continuity as a framework in understanding historical changes surrounding spirit/cults. As he sifts through the apparently chaotic facts about deities, myths and legends, ¶O(a,á)i Tr‘O(¿,`)ng proposes that one could examine the subjugation of the sacred to the secular, the meeting of different cultural traditions giving birth to new faiths and norms Ð all under a basic assumption: that a culture can change and transform, but does not dissolve or disappear without a trace.

Accordingly, Wolters' quasi-Braudelian structure, i.e. the tension between two subcultures mentioned above, if I understand
Trương correctly, appears to be underpinned by a common factor to both: the universal human attitude towards the sacred. This attitude was translated in forms peculiar to the ancient Âu/Lọ Viêt groups which persist over the centuries of adopting Confucianism and other cultural traits in their southward expansion. Have we not here some ammunition for another 'essentialist' argument for Vietnamese cultural identity?

Supernaturalism and Cultural Identity

Whether the essentialist views risk over-simplification on account of the many Austronesian groups dotting the mainland and islands from South China to the Malay peninsula is a matter for debate. Some of these groups are known to share various myths with the Vietnamese, and many of them would have come into contact with Vietnamese groups and become 'sinicized' (see for example Dournes 1983, Maurice 1983). Thus the two commonly-held main traits of the Vietnamese culture, as pointed out above, are attributed to (a) Confucianist orthodoxy in the North to maintain national independence and (b) assimilation with the Cham, Khmer, Malay and other Austroasian groups. Therefore an academic construction of the Viet identity may lean towards one or the other trait, combine or extend both. It appears to depend on the author's research paradigm.

Trương's historical insights are seminal and an important contribution to that debate on Vietnamese cultural origin and identity, especially when the materialist vision and metaphors are showing signs of wear and tear. The usefulness of alternative models now would perhaps lie in the exploration of variation and commonality in the psycho-social functions of not only myths, ceremonies and festivals but also of healers, charismatic leaders, millenarian movements to which I shall return later. An historical approach to examine the relationship between national and cultural identity in this on-going social construction would be deemed to adopt many a research paradigm. Wide implications for today's developments would be expected. Thus the case of the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum for example seen as a process of deification in spite of an overt secularism, could benefit from the resultant broadened perspective.

Supernaturalism, Ritual and Information Transduction

One of the areas of concern in the examination of cultural identity would be the social production of shared meanings. Hence ritual is among the key instances. And if ritual is a communicative act, with an aim to focus or reframe the meaning of reality, can the rituals ranging from healing to propitiation, to the act of proselytizing be regarded as having a common function? Here is perhaps a possibility for alternative formal models. For instance, the three-stage process in (a) the performance of ritual as suggested by Turner/van Gennep's definition (see for example Deflem 1991), and (b) in meaning reframing as 'information transduction' in the theory of hypnotherapy (for example, Rossi 1988), could be effective as a fore-structure in our conceptualization and classification.

Let me illustrate with an example in Vietnamese language.

i). The word tu (to correct, to improve) as in tu thánh (self-cultivation, including meditation) or tu sửa (to correct, to repair);

ii). the word chửa (to repair) as in sửa chữa (repair and correction) or chữa trị (to cure an illness).
The word c#´u (to help, rescue) as in c#´u ch*´a (to cure, heal), cO(´,«)u r>¥oi (salvation) and cO(´,«)u n´O(¿,«)c (rescue the nation).

These terms reflect a conceptual gestalt that knits together the individual and the social in a Vietnamese universe of action. Thus the idioms tu th>an t>Áe gia, ch*´a a b$inh tr!´ t!a, c#´u nh¿n ë$>o th>£e ('cultivate yourself and enhance order in your family', 'cure illnesses and banish harmful spirits', 'help the people and save the world') often concatenate in popular discourse. The implied ideals resonate to a Chinese belief expressed by Sun Sze-Mo, a physician of the eighth century A.D.: 'The lower doctor heals the illness, the median doctor heals the whole person, the higher doctor heals human society' (Holbrook 1981:336). Therefore to see ritual as information process is also to consider the possibility that different modes of communication, however diverse their functions may be, could belong to a continuum which may have a high heuristic value.

Supernaturalism, the Repressed and the Oppressed

If ritual as a field of communicative action is subsumed by a contest of discourses, an historical perspective may again prove to be useful. Here, ¶O(a,á)i Tr´O(¿,`)ng's imaginative interpretation, slipping through the Žlite's curtain of values and assumptions, highlighting traces and gaps in what is not considered relevant in other perspectives is an exemplary effort. His focus on the religious life at the grassroots level sheds light on various sociological aspects. It enables him to touch on the gender issue for example, in the cults of the Inner School with trance mediumship and other Southeast Asian traits, about which the literati were silent.

Elsewhere ¶O(a,á)i Tr´O(¿,`)ng refers to the tension or power struggle evidenced in the derogatory remarks and insults the Daoists mediums reserved for Lady LiO(u,~) HO(a,á)nh. While we ask what constituted this inter-group tension, it might pay not to preclude the possibility of interpreting the language in that state of consciousness. Systemic analysis comes to mind, as well as any comparison with the monks and the Daoists' discourses. Hence the prospect of decoding the social power relations inherent in these communicative modes.

The forces which marginalized groups such as the Inner School remain to be further examined. ¶O(a,á)i Tr´O(¿,`)ng's perspective highlights sexual repression, as instanced by the Confucianist Žlite's rejection of the rites that were suggestive of sexual wantonness, or by the LO(y,«) dynasty's campaign to eradicate d>am t!´ ('impure shrines', with the adjective d>am connoting 'sexual desire/excesses'). But he also cites some sources describing rituals where the worshippers displayed an egalitarian attitude towards their Guardian Spirit. How would this contrast with the Marxist view that spirit cult rituals paraphrase the discourse of the ruling class' ideology (see Tanabe 1988) or that they mirror the villager's political strategy in dealing with the secular administrative system (Feuchtwang 1974, Ahern 1981)? Furthermore, ¶O(a,á)i Tr´O(¿,`)ng has noted the ambivalent nature of villagers' relationship with the deities D a mixture of terror and intimacy. This three-faceted relationship, if it is the case, begs for further confirmation and corroboration by fieldwork, since it would be important to our understanding of the socio-political dynamics of Vietnamese culture.
To observe the way the spirits changed names and forms, how they were displaced, replaced, or promoted by both the ruling power and popular legends, then to match these changes with those in the secular world would result in a picture that could illuminate both these sets of changes. In considering what approach would be suitable, the above ponderous questions are some that I thought might be raised. While these issues may not come neatly within the boundary of one or two disciplines, I believe where the 'reader' of a cultural 'text' is aware of presuppositions and prejudices, and is prepared to engage in a 'dialogue of horizons' as Gadamer suggests, there is strong hope to properly address and explore the problems involved.

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Books and Journal Articles

The paper questions some previous assumptions about, and proposes to account for, the homeland for the nationalities of the Kam-Tai group, as well as their migration, the approximate time of the
migration, with regard to their history, their languages and their
distribution. Analysis has focused on linguistic evidence, among other
things. Special attention is devoted to a number of agricultural
terms, place names, business terms and kinship terms. It has been
demonstrated that there are remarkable similarities among members of
the Tai, Kam and Li branches, which indicates that they are not chance
occurrences or merely the result of close contact but are genetically
related. Based on this, the present paper argues that the Kam-Tai
group originated in southern China in the adjacent areas of
southwestern part of Guangdong (Canton), the southern part of Guizhou
and Guangxi, and the southeastern part of Yunnan, stretching from what
is now the central and western part of Guangdong to the southern part
of Yunnan. Specific evidence is drawn to support the hypothesis that
the Li branch had lived in (mainland) southwestern part of Guangdong
three or four millenia ago before they moved to the Hainan Island, the
Kam-Sui Branch, in southern part of Guangxi and southwestern part of
Guangdong, and the Zhuang-Buyi branch, mainly in northern and southern
part of Guangxi. The paper rejects previous views on the history of
the Kam-Tai group by offering further historical and linguistic
findings. It is concluded that the homeland for the Kam-Tai group is
Guangxi and eastern Yunnan and that there might have been several
massive migrations of the Tai group to the west into the borders of
Laos, Thailand and Burma and then to the northeast into Yunnan.

English abstract by Luo Yongxian

* A paper by Vladim'r LiO(s,ù)O(c,ù)‡k (Institute of Oriental Studies,
Prague) "'Miao Albums': their importance and study' appears in 'Cesky«
Lid 78 1991 (2): 96-100. The first two paragraphs are reproduced, with
a few of deletions, including footnotes.

The aim of the present paper is to make the scientists acquainted with
the results of the analysis of the "Miao albums" that is my PhD thesis
topic. The PhD thesis represents the preliminary study of the "Miao
albums", the unique manuscripts describing the style of life of ethnic
groups in southwest China in the 18th and 19th centuries. É

Under the term "Miao albums" (in Chinese Miao Man tu) sinologists
understand a kind of manuscript with coloured inscriptions and, in
greater part, also with the brief texts. These in the main part
anonymous manuscripts É are concerned with the style of life, customs
and habits of mostly non-Han Chinese ethnic groups of the southwestern
periphery of the Qing empire (1644-1912). Each text and illustration
usually describes one of the various ethnic groups which the Chinese
texts divide the inhabitants of southwest China in. Most of the ethnic
groups in southwest China were named as "Miao" or Miao-Man", hence
comes the term "Miao albums" (for that reason I write it with the
quotation marks). In the main part of the albums, the number of
described ethnic groups are 82, but comparing a larger number of
albums and relative sources, we can reach even more than 200 ethnic
names. Albums, in their majority, are concentrated in the province of
Guizhou, a little part in the provinces of Yunnan and Hunan.

The bibliography, of about 2,700 titles, covers Western language and Thai sources, and some Lao titles in transcription. The Foreword and Editor's Introduction are in English and Thai. The entries are arranged in twenty-four sub-divisions, including 'Tai in comparative perspective' and varying in population size from 'Siamese Thai' to 'Yo' (two Thai entries), a group in northeastern Thailand associated with the Phu Thai (Lao Song) (also included). Subjects are divided in twenty-two categories, though the literature on every group does not cover all categories. The categories include 'General works', 'Buddhism and society', 'Spirit cults and society', Khwan theory and practice', 'Tattooing' and 'Chronicles'.


From the publisher's notes:

The Pathamamulamuli is a palmleaf manuscript dating back several centuries. This text relates the arrangement of the World by Pu Sangaiya Sangkasi and Nang Itthang Gai Sangkasi, who are considered as the ancestors of the people of Lan Na (Northern Thailand). It also narrates the life of humans through the ages and describes the slow progress leading Tikkhadhamma to attain, for the first time in the world, the stage of Buddha.

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Conferences
Workshop on Thai Economic History
(from ECHOSEA Newsletter November 1991)

The Economic History of Southeast Asia Project held a successful workshop on November 9-10 to consider issues in Thai economic history.

More than twenty participants heard short presentations by Akiro Suehiro (Osaka City University), Sompop Manarungsan (Chulalongkorn University), Tony Reid (Convenor ECHOSEA Project, ANU), Junko Koizumi (Tokyo University), Peuipanh Ngaosyvathn (Griffith University, Queensland), Craig Reynolds (ANU), Peter Warr (ANU), Mehdi Kronkaew (ANU), Philip Hirsch (Sydney University), Peter Rimmer (ANU), Howard Dick (Newcastle University, NSW) Gill Burke and Malcolm Falkus
(Visiting Fellows, ECHOSEA Project, ANU). Participants also included David Wyatt, of Cornell University, making his first Australian visit, and Kevin Hewison (Murdoch University, Western Australia).

The felicitous juxtaposition of the Workshop with the first Thailand Update conference and the Cushman Memorial Lecture (November 11) produced an attendance of scholars both from here and overseas which would otherwise have been impossible.

No brief summary could do justice to the wide variety of topics covered and problems raised. Recurring themes included the inadequacy of statistical data, problems of defining a 'Thai state' in historical times, the significance of economic change in pre-Bowring and pre-Bangkok eras, and the relatively high levels of regional commercialization and specialization, even in remote regions, in early periods. Urbanization, in particular the role of Bangkok, also proved a fruitful theme.

Malcolm Falkus

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Letters

TJ Forsyth, a PhD student at the University of London, writes:
I have just returned from Thailand after a year's research into the links of environmental degradation and new, non-agricultural income (particularly tourism) in the Yao village of Pha Dua, Chiang Rai province. My initial motivation was to apply firm, scientific techniques to the explanation and management of the 'Himalayan degradation' debate. I ended up augmenting these with local perceptions of soil problems and economic opportunities, and the politics of watershed management. I now have a strong interest in political and social constructions of research and so-called environmental problems in this area, and in the settlement and political history of the North Thailand/Burma border region.

*Leedom Lefferts of Drew University, USA, has written enclosing a clipping from the New York Times of 27 Oct 1991 which reports the execution of 35 drug dealers in Kunming. This is part of an anti-drug trafficking campaign which included the burning of a tonne of heroin and four tonnes of opium.

On a lighter note, Dr Lefferts also included a copy of Exotic Thailand (2/91), a publication of the Tourist Authority of Thailand, which announces the plans of a company to start river cruises from Thailand up the Mekong River into China. The article states: 'Described by the company as a journey in paradise, the cruise service will take passengers from the Golden Triangle...on a 24-hour journey amidst lush forests and towering mountains to Kunming in China.'

A trial run for the cruise was due to be held in March 1991, with the service for paying passengers commencing in November 1991. Presumably the lack of recent publicity for this venture indicates that problems were encountered en route.
**Card Index and Bibliography**

The Richard Davis Card Index and The Thai-Yunnan Project Bibliography may now be acquired from a sub-directory 'coombspapers' via 'anonymous' FTP on the node COOMBS.ANU.EDU.AU. We hope that the main contents of back numbers of the Newsletter will also shortly be available.

**Proceedings of the International Conference on Thai Studies, Canberra, 3-6 July 1987**

compiled by Ann Buller

We are now remaindering our stock of these volumes. A few sets of the three volumes (Volume 3 is in two parts) are still available from Bibliotech (Anutech Pty Ltd, ANU, Box 4, GPO Canberra) @ Aus$60 per set. Individual copies of Volumes 1 and 2 are available from the Department of Anthropology @ Aus$10 each surface mail, or $5 if collected from the department.

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Aye Khaw: The Western impact of the legal system and customary law of Burma and Thailand
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Cheah Yanchong: The ancient culture of the Tai people
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The Newsletter is edited in the Community Health Research and Training Unit, Department of General Practice, University of Western Australia and transferred to The Australian National University by electronic mail for printing and distribution.

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***

1The first part of this paper, which discusses developments in Thai labour since the coup in February 1991, appeared in the September
issue (Number 14) of the Newsletter.

1 In their own 'Preface' the authors write: 'But the presumption in
the late 1980s of Australia under the Hawke Labor Government to force
the pace on a diplomatic solution to the problem becomes more
comprehensible when seen against the background of what we identify as
the Australian Cambodia-watching lobby - a complex of pseudo-left
experts, pseudo-experts, academic mandarins, nondescript activists,
pamphleteers, diplomat/politicians, aid workers and film makers,
journalists and other media sources, willynilly setting the agenda for
a New Standard Consensus on Cambodia, one that has consistently sought
to present an invasion as a variety of humanitarian rescue'.

2 I should mention the fact that Hun Sen, Sihanouk and the Vietnamese
have all given much credit to the efforts of Senator Evans.

3 Gunn and Lee say at one point that the policy of excluding Vietnam
from the international community was not of much use to the USA. This
is a most blinkered view. Whether the policy makers intended it or
not, the quarantining of Vietnam, as the support of the Mujahadeen in
Afghanistan, must surely rank as two of the most important factors in
the collapse of international communism, and the Vietnam case the
major cause of the defeat of communism in Southeast Asia.

4 By Uiaporn Thaeutchatrakul and Natwut Rungwong Khaw Phiset 4-10
November 2534: 10-16.

*Clare Hall, Cambridge University

This paper would not have been written without the support of Prof.
Yang Peixuan at the Yunnan Chinese Medical College and encouragement
of Catherine Jami. I would like to thank Gilbert Lewis for advice,
Ernest Gellner, P.U. Unschuld, Marta Hanson and Gregory Blue for their
valuable comments. The research was financed by the Swiss National
Foundation and the Wenner-Gren Foundation.

London

Furthermore, the 'Toleration Clause' in the Treaty of Tianjin (1858)
enabled Christian converts by implication to be exempted from Chinese
jurisdiction.

4The Catholics prospered in Sichuan (Société des missions Étrangères)
with estimates of up to 40,000 Catholic converts in 1801 and 80,000
converts in 1870 (Latourene, K.S. 1929. A history of Christian
missions in China London). In the 1880s, Yunnan's Catholic community
was said to comprise 1 bishop, 8 French priests, and 9000 converts
(Clark, G.W. 1894. Kwiechow and Yunnan Provinces. Shanghai: 63). The
Catholic missionary methods of the 19th century, however, were not as
diverse and flexible as those of the Protestants and they did not
expand as rapidly as the protestants did (Latourette, K.S. 1963.
Christianity in a revolutionary age: a history of Christianity in the
nineteenth and twentieth centuries. New York: vol 5).

5The mathematical and astronomical teaching of the Jesuits were a
means for proving the existence of God as well as for encouraging
conversion to Christianity. In 1692, the Emperor Kangxi (1662-1722)
was cured by a Jesuit from malaria by application of cinchona bark,
but the Jesuits' medical endeavours were not carried on; the
breakthrough in modern medicine was still to occur in Europe. (Hume,

and London
Lowe, J. 1886. Medical Missions, their Place and Power. London
Lowe 1886:121.
Rocher E. 1879. La Province du Yun-nan. Paris
Marianne Bastid, personal communication. See also: 1908. 'Variole et Vaccine en Indo-Chine'. Revue Indo-Chinois 91-92:479-92
Doumer, P. 1902. Situation de l'Indo-Chine 1897-1901. Hanoi
The Lisu inhabit mountainous regions of Western Yunnan (ca. 0.5m pers.), Thailand and Burma.
Taylor 1944:228
Kendall, R.E. 1948. Beyond the Clouds. Holborn Hall
Kendall 1948:30
Cohen 1963.
Clarke, S.R. 1910. Among the Tribes in Southwest China. London. 'Miao' refers to many related ethnic groups, mainly in and around Guizhnu province (ca. 4m pers.).
Kendall 1948:48
Christians fell under Western jurisdiction (cf. introduction).
Cohen 1963:31
The first clinic in China was an eye clinic, P. Parker's ophthalmic clinic in Canton. The cataract operation is still nowadays a strategy for advertising the benefits of Western medicine in virgin regions (e.g. job advertisement for Nepal of the International Red Cross in 1985).
According to Lutz (1971), eyes were allegedly used for producing the silver salts for photography. To link organs of vision with the preservation of vision reminds of sympathetic magic.
30Tian 1987:116
31Hsu 1943:42. Papalangi medicine refers to the white man's medicine.
32R. Koch discovered vibrio cholerae in 1883. In 1943 the cholera toxin was still to be discovered (1947) and only in the 1960s were further factors causing diarrhoea better understood (Van Heynmgen, W.E. and J.R. Seal 1983. Cholera: the American Scientific Experience 1947-80. Boulder)
33'Les EuropŽens rapidement alertes, prirent les prŽcautions d'usage et surveillèrent de pres leur personnel...: eau bouillante en permanence dans la cuisine, ordre d'Žchauder les bols, les assiettes, les couverts, dŽlŽense de toucher les aliments, de servir ou de manger des cruditŽs, lavage obligatoire des mains toutes les heures. Son
cuisinier, ..., manifesta une rŽpugnance invincible ` se soumettre ` ce traitement barbare. Il mŽprisait les manifestations f‰cheuses des superstitions Žtrangres...' (Gervais A. 1933. Aesculape en Chine.
1 I wish to thank Dr Wijeyewardene for the opportunity to express these ideas and for his kind suggestions. I am also grateful to Dr Craig Reynolds and Patrick Jory for their helpful comments.

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