

Chapters 3 and 8 address the subject of Brahmanism/Hinduism in Thai Buddhism. McDaniel describes unique mixtures of stories and images of Hindu deities that are utilised in the Thai Buddhist context. These deities are depicted on mural paintings and their statues are installed in halls and shrines in monastery compounds. The most popular deities regularly found in wats are Indra, Brahma, Ganesa, and Jivaka Komārabhacca (Thai: Phra Chiwok Goman). Thais do not necessarily regard these deities as ‘Hindu’ in this context.

Chapter 9 investigates the use of corpses as objects of meditation. He raises an important question about why there are many religious uses of corpses in a culture that promotes cremation. He traces the development of this practice to India and provides references of textual sources from South India, such as a manuscript dated to 1031 CE from Mysore (p. 196). He also identifies when the practice was introduced to northern Thailand in the mid-1400s through the tradition of *Vasubhāga*. McDaniel concludes that ‘scholars of Buddhist history and practice in Southeast Asia need to pay more attention to both southern Chinese and Sanskrit literary sources’ (p. 198).

Chapter 10 focuses on Buddhist nuns (Thai: *mae chī*). He examines why Thai nuns do not feel that they need to re-establish the identity of bhikkhunī (the fully ordained female Buddhist monastics during the time of Sakyamunī Buddha). Even though most of the *mae chī* he interviewed achieved high levels of knowledge of the Pali scriptures, they felt that the Order of Nuns cannot be revived before the arrival of the future Buddha, Maitreya. Thus, they teach Pali and concentrate on Buddha’s teaching. Some decide to remain ordained for the rest of their lives to encourage the spread of *dhamma*. This chapter also includes two interesting appendices: ‘Terms for Non-monastic Ascetics in Pali texts’, and ‘Vernacular Terms for Modern Professionally Celibate Women—“Third Status(es)”’.

The bibliography contains important sources in English, French, and Thai. Traditionally, Thai names are listed with their first name followed by their last name. However, some Thai names in the bibliography are listed both ways. In conclusion, this book should be read by scholars of both Buddhist and Southeast Asian Studies. It provides important explanations of Thai Buddhism and its religious beliefs from the past to the present.

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Thailand

Belittled citizens: The cultural politics of childhood on Bangkok’s margins

By GIUSEPPE BOLOTTA

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In this engrossing book, based on six years of fieldwork, Giuseppe Bolotta analyses the experiences of Thai slum children (*dek salam*) within many institutional

environments and social settings in Bangkok. His 'historically-informed ethnographic investigation' (p. 4) succeeds very well in unravelling the convergence and collisions between Thai state discourses, global humanitarian and human rights ideas, secular and religious child-saving ideologies, in the shaping of slum children's daily lives and socioeconomic mobilities in the Thai capital city. He argues, convincingly and insightfully, that the slum children's 'marginal childhoods' and the proliferation of institutions and organisations that intervened in their lives reflect 'endemic inequalities in Thailand's wider sociopolitical structure, as well as of transformations in the transnational governance of childhood that are related to globalisation' (p. 5). He also argues that the slum children's access to this array of care-giving institutions and their underpinning ideas of childhood gave them 'unexpected religious, economic, and political resources with which to challenge generational structures of power in Thai society' (ibid.). This reveals the uneven and intimate ways globalisation has destabilised and challenged the Thai state's power to discipline and order Thai childhoods and society.

In the first four chapters of the book, Bolotta investigates how Thai political elites, educators, and schools (chapter 1), Buddhist temples, welfare organisations and monks (chapter 2), a Catholic children's centre and foreign missionaries (chapter 3), and their different ideologies about child-saving and child-rearing, have shaped the *dek salam*'s everyday lives and interactions. Chapter 1 traces how Thailand's religiously inflected ideas of kingship, ethnic citizenship, and social hierarchies positioned children at the bottom of society and required them to perform deference to older children, adults, and the Thai monarch and state. The chapter also traces the Thai elite's creation of a country-wide school system to pursue the 'ethno-nationalistic assimilation and moral domestication' (p. 46) of all children in the kingdom since the early twentieth century. The resulting discourse of ideal Thai children as 'grateful, subordinate, and obedient' subjects of the Thai king, nation, and military (p. 6), which stigmatised slum children as deficient, became an indelible part of the cultural politics of childhood. Throughout the book, Bolotta highlights the ways Thai adults constantly evaluated slum children against this yardstick. He also unravels this discourse's influence over slum children's actions, practices, aspirations and anxieties.

Chapter 2 looks closely at activist monks' combination of child-saving ideas with their brands of socially engaged Buddhism, which underpinned their provision of care and religious education for the *dek salam*. The monks provided alternative ideas of childhood that provided 'competing politico-religious discourses' pertaining to Thai childhoods, Thai children's moral and filial duties, and parental authority (p. 59). Similarly, in chapter 3, Bolotta shows how Catholic missionaries applied their own interpretations of Catholicism, including the interpolation of Christian ideas of childhood within the 'secular global framework of children's rights' (p. 39), to justify the provision of welfare and social support for slum children. Chapter 4 is an excellent analysis of how slum children and their mothers exploited the local and foreign humanitarian attention given to the children to acquire symbolic, political, and economic capital or benefits.

Scholars who study childhood and youth will be interested in Bolotta's reading of children's self-polysemy as agency. By revealing children's 'uncanny capacity ... to incorporate, reformulate, contest, and deploy multiple childhoods, and to act as social

chameleons' according to the social and institutional context they were in (p. 15), Bolotta emphasises that slum children were not passive subjects of disciplinary discourses or naïve innocents. Instead, they were 'competent social actors equipped with agency' (p. 12). The second part of the book focuses on how individual slum children 'form[ed] their own sense of self through these multiple contexts and political processes' (p. 11) and dexterously appropriated adults' images of slum children as victims 'to increase their potential to achieve specific economic, social and affective objectives' (p. 14). In chapter 5, Bolotta invokes James Scott-esque vocabulary to argue that children organised their lives and engaged in 'anti-structural and cathartic behaviour' in Thai slums in conscious rejection or usurpation of Thai social hierarchies and norms (p. 129). Chapter 6 is an empathetic analysis of the ten-year 'life trajectories' of some of these children. Even as individual children creatively formulated and performed multiple selves for their own benefit, the ideal Thai self remained a psychological structure that caused them to suffer from self-stigmatisation, guilt, and feelings of 'social inadequacy, powerlessness and fragmentation' (p. 16). Hence Bolotta shows that children's exercise of agency may not be as triumphant or liberating as studies of children or youth agency tend to portray.

This is an excellent addition to the emerging body of scholarship on childhood and youth in Asia. It shows that age relations is an invaluable lens to critique change and transformation, as well as illuminate sociopolitical and cultural competition between the state, religious and international organisations, missionaries and religious practitioners, mothers, and of course the slum children themselves. While Bolotta chiefly intervenes in conversations in social sciences, there is room for him to engage recent conversations in the historiography of childhood and youth, especially those pertaining to children's emotion work and critiques of 'agency' (by scholars such as Kristine Alexander, Mona Gleason and Susan Miller). Bolotta's study should pave the way for more studies of other groups of Thai youth from different viewpoints. These should include the study of non-marginal groups, lest they are prematurely mistaken as passive, obedient adherents of the Thai state's discourses, or as less resourceful, less creative actors.

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Timor Leste

Haunted houses and ghostly encounters: Ethnography and animism in East Timor, 1860–1975

By CHRISTOPHER J. SHEPHERD

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Ethnography in the colonial era is often seen as a 'softer' front of domination, as colonial powers sought to control local systems so as to better subsume them under