

# Thai Studies in the United States<sup>1</sup>

## ไทยศึกษาในสหรัฐอเมริกา

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### Abstract

“Thai Studies” in the United States have always been influenced – some would even say on occasion been determined – by American policies regarding Thailand and by Thai politics. In this paper I trace the development of Thai studies in the US from the immediate post-World War II period when a few American scholars began to develop Thai studies to the present day.

Since the early twenty-first century, fewer and fewer American graduate students have chosen to study Thailand and fewer and fewer Thai are coming to the US to study. Nonetheless, Thai studies in America will not disappear. The impressive Thai collections at libraries at Cornell, Wisconsin, Northern Illinois University, and the University of Washington and smaller collections elsewhere ensure that there will continue to be a significant scholarly legacy for Thai studies in the United States. Future scholars – from Thailand, the US and elsewhere will be able to find in these collections significant materials for future research.

**Keywords:** Thai studies, the United States, Thailand

## บทคัดย่อ

ตลอดระยะเวลาที่ผ่านมา “ไทยศึกษา” ในสหรัฐอเมริกา มักจะได้รับอิทธิพลจากนโยบายของอเมริกาที่มีต่อประเทศไทย กับทั้งการเมืองของประเทศไทย ในบทความนี้ ผู้เขียนย้อนให้เห็นถึงพัฒนาการของไทยศึกษาในสหรัฐอเมริกา จากยุคหลังสงครามโลกครั้งที่สองที่มีนักวิชาการชาวอเมริกันเพียงไม่กี่คนได้เริ่มพัฒนางานไทยศึกษา มาจนถึงปัจจุบัน นับตั้งแต่ช่วงต้นศตวรรษที่ 21 จำนวนนักศึกษาระดับบัณฑิตศึกษาที่เป็นชาวอเมริกันที่เลือกศึกษาประเทศไทยได้ลดน้อยลง เช่นเดียวกับการลดลงของคนไทยที่เข้าศึกษาต่อในสหรัฐอเมริกา กระนั้นก็ตาม ไทยศึกษาในอเมริกาจะยังคงมีอยู่ การรวบรวมเอกสารเกี่ยวกับประเทศไทยในห้องสมุดที่มหาวิทยาลัยคอร์เนล วิสคอนซิน นอร์ทอิสลินอยส์ และมหาวิทยาลัยวอชิงตัน รวมทั้งที่มีเล็กน้อยที่สถาบันอื่นเป็นการยืนยันว่ามรดกทางวิชาการเกี่ยวกับไทยศึกษาในสหรัฐอเมริกาจะยังคงมีการสืบทอดและดำเนินต่อไป ในอนาคต นักวิชาการทั้งจากประเทศไทย สหรัฐอเมริกาและประเทศอื่นๆ จะสามารถค้นคว้าเอกสารเหล่านั้นสำหรับการวิจัยต่อไป

**คำสำคัญ:** ไทยศึกษา, สหรัฐอเมริกา, ประเทศไทย

## Introduction

“Thai Studies” in the United States – that is, studies of Thailand by American-based scholars or American-trained scholars – have always been influenced – some would even say on occasion been determined – by American policies regarding Thailand and by Thai politics. I want to trace the development of Thai studies in the US from the immediate post-World War II period when a few American scholars began to develop Thai studies to the present day. In the first, ‘Cold War’, phase (1946-1975) a number of American institutions began to foster the study of Thailand and even more were engaged in training

students from Thailand. During this period, except for a few years immediately after the war and a few more years in the early 1970s, Thailand was under military rule. The US was allied with Thailand's military rulers in order, as was American policy at the time, to stem the advance of communist-led governments in Asia. Because the US government provided substantial support for area studies programs at American universities in order to expand the cadre of experts on Asia and to provide for educational opportunities in the US for Thai students, the study of Thailand became a significant part of the curriculum of a number of American universities.

The creation of the Peace Corps, and especially the beginning of the Peace Corps in Thailand in 1962, led to many young Americans going to Thailand. Not a small number of these would return to the States to pursue graduate study of Thailand. By the 1970s the American-led War in Indochina also influenced the development of Thai studies. Many of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who served in Vietnam came to know Thailand as a place for "R-and-R" ('rest and recreation') in Thailand. Although only a very few of these soldiers would become scholars of Thailand, that they had become the face of America for many Thai would contribute to shaping how Americans were viewed by Thai.

The growing anti-Vietnam war movement in the US made deep impressions on many Thai who had come to study in the US and their politicization continued when they returned to Thailand. Several of the leaders of the student movement in Thailand in the late 1960s and early 1970s would go on to study in the US. They would play a role in ushering in a new phase of Thai studies in the US.

The beginning of the second, 'post-Vietnam war', phase of Thai studies in the US can, I believe, be precisely dated to 1975. The end of the American

War in Indochina brought to a close the anti-communist period of official American-Thai relations. This new phase would last until the late 1980s. The American withdrawal from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos led to a marked decline in the incomes of many Thai who had worked with or catered to both official and unofficial Americans. The withdrawal was also deeply disturbing to the Thai monarchy, military, and bureaucracy as it appeared to leave Thailand to confront the communist-led insurgency within the country on its own, a troubling prospect given that many students were now inclined to support leftist leaders. The Thai student-led movement against military rule succeeded in 1973 in compelling the then military dictators to flee the country, but the subsequent short period of government under an elected parliament came to an end in 1976 with the brutal suppression of the movement by the military. During the new period of military dictatorship followed by a period of ‘demi-democracy’ in which elected governments were allowed to share some power with the military, there was a marked decline in American scholarly interest in Thailand.

The third, ‘Democracy’, phase of Thai studies began in the 1990s. After urban-based protests against military rule, culminating in the ‘Black May’ (Thai, *phrűtsapha thamın*/พฤษภาทมิฬ) tragedy in May 1992 that led to the resignation of a military led government, there was strong public will for the institutionalization of constitutional democracy, leading to the adoption of a new constitution in 1997 that is still seen as the most democratic one Thailand has ever had.

Parliamentary democracy in Thailand was strongly supported by the US government and in the 1990s and early twentieth century many younger American scholars carried out research in Thailand. As there was also significant support – primarily from foundations, but also through the Fulbright program

– available during this period for Thai to pursue higher education in the US, there was also an increase in Thai studying in the US, particularly in post-B.A. programs. Although Cornell remained the choice of many Thai students, a significant number went to other universities. During the period, between 1994 and 2010 I myself supervised eleven PhD dissertations based on primary research in Thailand. Of these students, seven were Thai<sup>1</sup>, and the rest were American.<sup>2</sup> A number of influential Thai academics were also trained at other American institutions in this period.<sup>3</sup>

The next, ‘Military Dictatorship’, phase in Thai studies in the US began with a coup in 2006 that overthrew the democratically-elected government of Thaksin Shinawatra. Thaksin had proven to be a highly successful politician, leading his party (first called Thai Rak Thai, later the People’s Power Party, and most recently the Pheu Thai Party) to significant electoral victories in 2001 and 2005. Despite efforts on the part of the military and bureaucratic elite, backed by the urban middle class, to insure through legal and extra-legal means that Thaksin could not return to power, his followers gave substantial electoral victories in 2007 and 2011 to a party headed by Thaksin surrogates, most recently his sister, Yingluck. Upset that the parliamentary system could not be rigged against Thaksin, the military seized full control of the government in 2014. The sharp restrictions on the media and the crackdown on protestors since General Prayut Chan-ocha and General Prawit Wongsuwan imposed absolute control over the country have deterred foreign scholars, including from the US, from encouraging their students to undertake research in Thailand.

Thai Studies in America have never been formally organized, although the Thailand/Laos/Cambodia subgroup of the Southeast Council of the Association for Asian Studies and the web linkages it fosters have been especially significant in promoting exchanges among Thai specialists.

The Southeast Asian studies centers at Northern Illinois University and the University of Wisconsin have co-sponsored a Council on Thai Studies that holds an annual meeting. For the most part, however, specialists on Thailand have depended on their home universities for support. Cornell has been the most consistent supporter of faculty working on Thailand and has produced more PhDs whose research has focused on Thailand than has any other American university.

In November 2016 Donald J. Trump won the election to become the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. His public stance regarding American foreign policy seems likely to further dampen support for American students studying abroad including in Thailand.<sup>5</sup> Thus, American scholarship on Thailand seems likely to be relegated in the foreseeable future to libraries and archives. Nonetheless, it is of value, I believe, to recognize that there has been a rich history of such scholarship by faculty and students associated with American universities and it is towards the end of making that history better known that I have written this essay.

## **Cold War: Post World War II – 1975**

Asian studies in the United States prior to World War II had been for the most part undertaken by a small number of what were then called ‘Orientalists’ who focused their attention on the historical traditions of China and Japan. The war led, however, to a major change in American scholarly interest in Asia.

The United States never recognized wartime Thailand’s declaration of war and after the war took the lead in preventing Thailand’s wartime leaders

from being prosecuted for this act. As a consequence the United States was viewed in favorable terms by postwar Thai governments, including by the wartime dictator Field Marshal Phibun Songkram after he returned to power following a coup in 1947. As Daniel Fineman (1997) has shown, this stance on the part of the US was impelled by the American shift to anti-Communism as the basis of US foreign policy. At the same time there were some involved in shaping US policy toward Thailand who were interested in helping Thailand become an exemplar among Third World countries in pursuing significant economic development. These policies became connected. A country on a trajectory of economic development would be in official American eyes less vulnerable to efforts to woo its populace to communism. It was this approach that led the United States to offer substantial aid to Thailand in the form of support for development projects, scholarships for Thai students to study at American colleges and universities, as well as aid to the Thai military.

During World War II a few American scholars had for reasons related to the war become interested in and were engaged on work on Thailand. These included the well-known anthropologist, Ruth Benedict who was commissioned to undertake a “study at a distance” based on published work and some interviews of Thai living in North America. Her *Thai Culture and Behavior* (Benedict, 1952), that used her culture and personality approach, became an influential work for scholars who undertook first hand research about the influence of Thai culture on interpersonal interactions. Benedict never undertook research on Thailand after the war. In contrast, two linguists – Mary Haas<sup>6</sup> later at the University of California at Berkeley, who had previously focused her attention on Native American languages, and William Gedney<sup>7</sup>, later at the University of Michigan, both of whom acquired competence in Thai language during the war went on to engage in research about language in Thailand. John Embree, an anthropologist who had undertaken research

in prewar Japan, was recruited in the immediate postwar period to serve as cultural attaché at the American embassy in Bangkok. There he became interested the study of Thailand and became the founding director of the Council on Southeast Asian Studies at Yale. Embree's 1950 paper, "Thailand – A Loosely Structured Social System" based on impressionistic observations juxtaposed with his knowledge of highly structured Japanese society, set the agenda for a generation of scholarship on Thailand. Lauriston Sharp, an anthropologist who had engaged in research among Australian aborigines, had previously developed a strong interest in Southeast Asia after studying with Robert von Heine-Geldern in Vienna.<sup>8</sup> He was not, however, to pursue interests in Southeast Asia until the war when he was recruited for work in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). It was at this time that he developed a strong interest in Thailand. He returned to his teaching post at Cornell after the war and there became the founding director of the Southeast Asia Studies program that became the preeminent place from the late 1940s on for those interested in pursuing the study of Southeast Asia.

Sharp was drawn to a small group of scholars outside Cornell such as Rupert Emerson, Cora DuBois, and Raymond Kennedy who had begun to envision a new post-colonial order in Asia (Keyes, 1994). In 1945 Sharp took leave from Cornell to contribute to translating this vision into reality by joining the State Department as Assistant Chief of the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs. Sharp's first published essays concerning Southeast Asia, namely "Colonial Regimes in Southeast Asia" and "French Plans for Indochina" (1946a and 1946b), reflect the effort he and others undertook to shape American policy in support of emerging nationalist movements in Asia.

Sharp realized that the implementation of such a policy was severely hampered by the lack of specialists who knew anything about Southeast Asia.



He returned to Cornell in 1946 determined to create a new institution designed to address this problem. In 1947 he initiated the Thailand project at Cornell, a project linked to a larger comparative undertaking with colleagues at Cornell that undertook to study peoples caught up in global processes of modernization.

The centerpiece of the Cornell-Thailand Project was a multi-disciplinary study of the rural community of Bang Chan located near Bangkok. Research began in Bang Chan in 1948 and for the next decade more than a dozen scholars both Thai and American, and including social and natural scientists, spent varying lengths of time working in this village.<sup>9</sup> The Bang Chan project was midwife to a long-term collaborative relationship between Sharp and Lucien Hanks, a collaboration that often also involved Jane Hanks and Ruth Sharp as well. Lucien Hanks spent most of his academic career at Bennington College, but also had a long-term research affiliation with Cornell. He had developed an abiding interest in Southeast Asia when he served with the Office of Strategic Service (OSS) in northern Burma during the war. He and his anthropologist wife, Jane Richardson Hanks, had carried out research among the Blackfoot Indians before the war, but beginning with their involvement in the Thailand project they spent the rest of their lives engaged in research and writing about Thailand.<sup>10</sup>

The Thailand project would also become the launching pad for a number of other American scholars, such as anthropologists Robert Textor and Herbert Phillips and political scientist David Wilson, whose long-term research would concern Thailand. G. William Skinner, another anthropologist and a former student of Sharp's, joined the Thailand project in 1949 after being expelled from China where he had gone for dissertation research. Skinner turned his attention to a study of the Chinese in Thailand and wrote the still very relevant *Chinese Society in Thailand*. Skinner was field director

of the Thailand project from 1951 to 1955 and then was hired on the regular faculty in Sociology-Anthropology at Cornell. In the 1950s and 1960s numerous students at Cornell, myself included, would become specialists on Thailand through the mentorship of Sharp and Skinner.

Cornell was not the only place that Thai studies were emerging in American academia in the 1950s and 1960s. The institution that was originally more heavily involved than Cornell in the training of students from Thailand was the University of Indiana. In 1964 Indiana began recruiting Thai students and in 1966, with funding from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Ford Foundation, led the effort to set up the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) at Thammasat University.<sup>11</sup> Led by two political scientists, William J. Siffin and Fred W. Riggs, the University of Indiana trained thousands of Thai primarily in public administration and education. Siffin's *The Thai Bureaucracy: Institutional Change and Development* and Riggs's *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity*, both published in 1966, became the authoritative works on what Riggs termed the Thai "bureaucratic polity", referring to the institution that dominated and continues to dominate Thai political life well into the twenty-first century. Their studies reinforced the perspective that had been previously developed in David Wilson's *Politics in Thailand* (1962). It was not until the major political upheavals of the 1970s that American and other scholars recognized that there were significant political dynamics in Thailand outside of those controlled by the *kha ratchakan*, the bureaucrats whose primary identity was as 'servants of the monarchy'.

By the 1960s there was a growing number of American scholars, mainly anthropologists, whose work began to contribute to an understanding of Thai society as being made up of more than the monarchy, the military, and those living in Bangkok. The Bang Chan project laid the foundation for understanding

rural society, as is evident in the work of Robert Textor and Herbert Phillips. Although Textor is best known for his writings about religion in Bang Chan, he took time off from the Bang Chan project to undertake pioneering work on taxi drivers in Bangkok. His finding (Textor, 1961) that these drivers were overwhelmingly from northeastern Thailand can be seen as an early contribution to challenging the myth of a homogeneous Thai society. Phillips, through his research on personality and culture in Bang Chan (see Phillips, 1965), found support for John Embree's (1950) impressionistic conclusion that Thai society was 'loosely structured'. In my own review of Phillips's book (Keyes, 1966: 794), I argued that "The fact that the village of Bang Chan was relatively recently settled by migrants from Bangkok may be related to a type of 'rugged individualism' found in other frontier areas. Further, the settlement pattern of a central Thai community, in which families live in isolated homesteads, is undoubtedly relevant to the atomistic nature of the village." In the 1960s the diversity of rural cultures in Thailand was beginning to be known from the work of Michael Moerman among Tai-Lue villagers in northern Thailand<sup>12</sup>, William Klausner, in a village in Ubon Ratchathani in northeastern Thailand, whose work<sup>13</sup> provided a foundation for my own studies centered in the central northeastern province of Mahasarakham (Keyes, 1967a, 1967b), A. Thomas Kirsch (1966, 1967) who carried out fieldwork among the Phu Thai of northeastern Thailand, and the political scientist M. Ladd Thomas (1967) in Muslim villages in Songkhla. In addition a number of anthropologists, including Peter Kunstadter, then at Princeton, David Marlowe from Walter Reed Hospital and Delmos Jones from Cornell, as well as several non-American anthropologists, notably the Australians William Geddes, Peter Hinton, and Douglas Miles, were engaged in the study of upland minority peoples in northern Thailand, Kunstadter on the Lua, Marlowe on the Sgaw Karen, Jones on the Lahu, and Geddes on the Hmong, Hinton on the P'wo Karen, and Miles on the Mien (Yao).

By the end of the 1960s, Thai studies in America had expanded from Cornell and Yale to include the University of Michigan, the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Hawaii, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Washington, and Northern Illinois University. Indiana was no longer a center, for although Siffin remained on the faculty, Riggs had moved to Hawaii and the university was no longer attracting large numbers of Thai students. A few American Thai specialists, trained in the 1950s and 1960s, were also teaching at other universities.

In the 1960s a number of US government agencies became involved in organizing or sponsoring what was then termed operational-oriented research in Thailand. Unlike scholarly research, at least in its ideal form, operational-oriented research did not seek knowledge for deepening understanding of human culture and society but instead sought to further specific political and/or political-economic ends. At the time, the primary political goal of the US in Thailand, as elsewhere in Asia, was to prevent, or even roll back, the spread of communism.

In 1954 the US government through the CIA provided foundational funding for the Asia Foundation, “to undertake cultural and educational activities on behalf of the United States Government in ways not open to official U.S. agencies.”<sup>14</sup> Although government funding continued, the connection with the CIA was effectively ended in the late 1960s. Early in its history, however, it did work to help shape religious and cultural institutions, including very much in Thailand, to be bulwarks against communism (see Ford, 2012).

A US government research agency that took the lead in more direct ‘operational’ research in Thailand was the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) in the Defense Department. It worked sometimes cooperatively but often independently of the United States Agency for International Development.

USAID had as its primary goal assisting less-developed countries in the improving the welfare of their peoples. While as noted above this goal had become linked to anti-communist insurgency efforts because of the assumption that development would make people less inclined to turn to communism, operational research sponsored by the US defense department had very different ethical implications for scholars than did the work of USAID. This first became clear in the reaction to what was known as “Project Camelot” in the mid-1960s.

Project Camelot was conceived of as a counterinsurgency project that aimed at enhancing the American military’s “ability to predict and influence social developments in foreign countries.”<sup>15</sup> The project was focused on Latin America, but it was intended to be the model for similar projects elsewhere in the world. Despite the strong negative reaction among academic organizations, with the American Anthropological Association in the forefront, to Project Camelot as a violation of scholarly ethics, the Department of Defense continued to fund counterinsurgency research.

Some US based scholars working on Thailand, myself included, were willing to assist the USAID mission in Thailand, known there as the United States Operation Mission (USOM), in providing research findings from open research and through consultations that would assist USAID in shaping development assistance to the country. To facilitate such consultations, an advisory board of American Thai specialists known as the Academic Advisory Council on Thailand (AACT) was set up in 1966.

In the spring of 1970 at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies a panel on “Regionalism in Northern Thailand” – a panel at which I presented a paper – proved to be the beginning of what became known as the ‘Thailand controversy’ in American Anthropology.<sup>16</sup> Students involved in

the anti-Vietnam war movement in the United States had obtained copies from the files of Michael Moerman, a professor of anthropology at the University of California in Los Angeles and a key member of several academic groups recruited to provide advice for United States agencies involved in security and development programs in Thailand. Many of these files were published in an anti-war publication, *The Student Mobilizer*, the day before the Association for Asian Studies annual conference began. As Moerman was also to appear at the panel as a discussant, the panel drew a huge crowd instead of the handful of committed Thai-specialists that might have been expected. Although the audience did not interrupt the presentations of the papers, once the discussion period was open there were vehement attacks made on all the participants and on many other anthropologists mentioned in Moerman's files for having worked to support the United States counterinsurgency program in Thailand.

This attack was carried forward into a national milieu when Eric Wolf, a highly respected senior anthropologist, and Joseph Jorgensen, a more junior scholar, both at the University of Michigan, published a long article entitled "Anthropology on the Warpath" in the *New York Review of Books* (Wolf and Jorgensen, 1970). Wolf and Jorgensen accused most American anthropologists who had worked in Thailand of having betrayed their profession by contributing either directly – as contract researchers for the Defense Department's Advanced Research Project Agencies, for Defense Department supported research agencies such as the RAND corporation, or USAID – or indirectly – as members of advisory groups to these agencies – to the furtherance of counterinsurgency programs that would have a very negative impact on the communities in which these anthropologists had worked.

The Wolf and Jorgensen's article became a brief for an investigation launched at the meeting in the fall of 1970 of the annual conference of the American Anthropological Association. Following a highly tumultuous meeting, the association's officers appointed Margaret Mead to head an ad hoc committee to investigate the charges set forth by Wolf and Jorgensen. During the next year, while this committee undertook its work, the public debate about the role of anthropologists in Thailand continued not only in the United States but also in Australia. In Australia, there were strong public attacks made on William Geddes and Peter Hinton for their roles as advisors to the Tribal Research Center.

In November 1971 the Mead committee presented its report at the business meeting of the American Anthropological Association. The committee reported that while some anthropologists had perhaps been naïve in their relationship to US government agencies, no evidence could be found that the work of any anthropologist had created negative repercussions for the peoples of the communities in which they had worked. Although several people, including myself, had pressed the Mead committee to consult with Thai, the committee actually made no effort to do so. The Mead committee report was voted down at the business meeting of the AAA. Despite this equivocal ending, no further efforts were made to resolve this internal conflict within the American Anthropological Association.

Lauriston Sharp, the American anthropologist who had initiated the first empirical anthropological study in Thailand and had been the guiding figure in the development of an American-based anthropology of Thailand, and William Geddes, an Australian anthropologist who had undertaken the first post-World War II study of the Hmong, an upland people in Thailand, both felt that their reputations had been severely injured as a consequence

of the Thailand controversy. Geddes would go on to win a libel suit against an Australian newspaper that had published an attack on him, but Sharp would never really feel exonerated. Sharp was deeply pained by being named in a 'public dispute' that was mounted, in the words of the Mead Commission report, 'without due and careful consideration of the repercussions upon our colleagues, both members of the American Anthropological Association and others, ... contrary to the spirit of scholarly and scientific work and inimical to international cooperation' (quoted in Wakin, 1992: 292). A public attack impelled by the Thailand controversy, led by Ben Anderson, on Sharp and David Wyatt at Cornell, created a rift among faculty and students in Southeast Asian studies at Cornell, a rift that long festered but because of the strong moral influence of George Kahin the rift did not become a permanent rupture.<sup>17</sup>

The "Thailand Controversy" actually had little resonance, at least initially, within Thai academia, but it did signal within American anthropology a marked shift in theoretical focus. By the time the controversy broke out, American anthropologists – including many who worked in Thailand – were beginning to focus attention on social conflict rather than on the functional integration of society as had been the dominant paradigm in anthropology since the field had begun in the late nineteenth century and in American studies of Thailand since Embree. While I agree with the Mead committee report that some anthropologists, and I would include myself in this regard, were somewhat naïve about what relations with US government agencies might entail, I still feel that most of the anthropological work in Thailand in the 1960s actually contributed not to the success of counterinsurgency programs or to the Thai government's goal of suppressing threats to national security but to a recognition that Thai society was beset by cleavages, some of which could and would become the sources of social conflict.<sup>18</sup> That this was the case would become more obvious as the 1970s progressed.



## The Turbulent 1970s

Beginning in the late 1960s a number of Thai students at Thammasat University and a few from other colleges and universities began to protest against the long military rule of their country. Their numbers increased when several Thai who had studied in America and had been influenced by the emerging anti-war movement in the US returned to Thailand.<sup>19</sup> In the early 1970s the Thai student movement was growing and was increasingly agitating for a restoration of democracy. While teaching at Chiang Mai University from 1972 to 1974 I was aware that the Thai student movement was growing in strength. The student protests, now supported by an increasing number of urban middle-class Thai, a class to which most of the students themselves belonged, reached a climax in October 1973. When the government, led by the military dictators Thanom Kittikachorn and Praphas Charusathien, began to use force to repress the protests, the movement only gained in strength. On October 14, 1973 King Bhumipol intervened and ordered the dictators into (temporary) exile. Although democratic governments then emerged following elections, right-wing elements in the military and in military-sponsored organizations began to use extra-legal means, including assassinations, to gain back power.

When Richard Nixon, then US president, launched an opening to China in a visit in 1972, the anti-communist rationale for US-Thailand relations began to be questioned not only by Thai students, but also by members of the Thai government and by scholars of Thailand in the US. In November 1975 Thailand formally recognized China and began to push the US to reduce its military presence in the country. This followed the American withdrawal from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and the emergence of communist-led governments in these countries. The possibility that communists in Thailand could now succeed

with the ending of American support for the Thai military was deeply threatening to the Thai monarchy, bureaucracy and military. In 1976 the Thai military launched a bloody crackdown on the student protestors and on October 6, 1976 (*hok tula* / **หกดุลา**) ended the protests with dozens dead and hundreds under arrest. Although the official American response to the coup was initially to condemn it, the fact that many students left Bangkok to join an expanding insurgency led by the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) was also considered to threaten to turn Thailand into a new Vietnam. In this context the US continued support for the Thai military. This would continue uninterrupted from then on despite subsequent interventions in Thai political life by the Thai military and periods of democratic rule.

American scholars of Thailand overwhelmingly condemned the *hok tula* massacre at Thammasat and the installation of the most repressive government in Thai history. There is no question but that we American scholars who were specialists on Thailand at the time of the sixth of October 1976 repression view our scholarship from a political perspective that is not always shared by scholars who began their careers well after this event. The strongest American academic reaction to *hok tula*, was by Benedict Anderson, a professor of Government at Cornell who after the military takeover in Indonesia had switched his scholarly interest from Indonesia to Thailand. Anderson's (1977) "Withdrawal Symptoms: Social and Cultural Aspects of the October 6 Coup" and his "Studies of the Thai State: The State of Thai Studies" (Anderson, 1978) became and remain powerful calls for politically engaged scholarship on Thailand. I have to note that while I am impressed by Anderson's papers on Thailand, I find them to not take into account adequately the work of other scholars whose research has been focused on communities in Thailand outside of Bangkok. The different perspectives offered by scholars whose attention has been focused on the center – the monarchy, the bureaucracy, Bangkok

society – and those who have worked upcountry in rural areas and among minorities remains characteristic of scholarship (by American, Thai, and others) about Thailand to the present day.

Most scholars in Thailand of the *hok tula* generation also share this perspective. Thongchai Winichakul, one of the leaders of the student movement of the 1970s who was imprisoned after the crackdown in 1976, after taking his PhD in history at University of Sydney became an influential member of the American scholarly community as a professor at the University of Wisconsin. His book *Siam Mapped* was published (Thongchai Winichakul, 1994) successfully challenged the established argument that Thailand is unique because it was never colonized. Thongchai's "Remembering/Silencing the Traumatic Past: The Ambivalent Memories of the October 1976 Massacre in Bangkok," is both a heartfelt personal reflection on and a deeply thoughtful scholarly assessment of what is the most significant political event in modern Thai history.

Thongchai was not the first Thai to join an American university faculty. He was preceded by Thak Chaloemtiarana who had first studied in Hong Kong and then the Philippines. After finishing his study for his undergraduate degree at Occidental he followed a close friend and fellow Occidental student Charnvit Kasetsiri to Cornell. Thak had been influenced in the US by the anti-Vietnam war movement<sup>20</sup> and although he had originally planned to study the Indonesian military for his PhD, he was persuaded by Lauriston Sharp to undertake research on Thai politics. His *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism*, that originated in his 1974 dissertation on Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, has remained the single best work on the role of the Thai military in politics.<sup>21</sup>

Those of us trained in American universities in the period from the 1940s through the 1970s were what was termed “area specialists”. Whatever our discipline, we also immersed ourselves in studies of the history, geographical, and social science as well as in many cases the literature and art studies about the country we intended to do our research in. We also worked to become proficient not only in the spoken, but also the written language of that country. A notable exemplar of the area studies approach was Frank E. Reynolds, a professor (from 1967 to 2005) in the Divinity School at the University of Chicago. Reynolds had taken a divinity degree at Yale and then served three years as program director at the Student Christian Center in Bangkok. He then entered the PhD program in the Chicago Divinity School. Although the school had been founded with the purpose of training Protestant clergy, by the time Reynolds entered graduate school at the School it was oriented towards the study of religion in a comparative perspective and not just the training of specialists in a particular religious tradition. At Chicago Reynolds decided to pursue a degree in the history of religion, a field of comparative religion begun at Chicago by Mircea Eliade. “Throughout Reynolds’s career at Chicago, he has fostered – through his writing, his teaching, and the research projects he has directed – the establishment and development of religious studies as an independent discipline that utilizes and creatively adapts approaches employed in other areas of the humanities and social sciences.”<sup>22</sup>

Reynolds retained a life-long interest in religion in Thailand and in the transformations of the Buddhist tradition there. His interest took him back in time to the fourteenth century to a work that was fundamental to the establishment of what he came to term “cosmological Buddhism” – namely a work ascribed to an early king of the first ‘Thai’ kingdom of Sukhothai (Reynolds, Frank, and Mani Reynolds, 1982).<sup>23</sup> In subsequent work, he became

deeply interested in the role of Buddhism as the establishment religion of Thailand (Reynolds, 1973) and then in what he termed 'civic religion', that is religion as practiced with reference to the Thai political context (Reynolds, 1977). This approach has been superseded by attention to what has come to be known as socially-engaged Buddhism.<sup>24</sup>

The anthropologist who took a similar approach to Reynolds to the study of religion and society was Stanley J. Tambiah. Although a Christian Tamil from Sri Lanka and trained originally as a sociologist at Cornell, he made his reputation with the study of the role of Buddhism in Thai society. After completing his PhD in 1954 and first assuming a teaching position at the University of Sri Lanka, he went to Thailand to work for UNESCO's Fundamental Education Center in Bangkok. Under this program he began research in the Isan (Thai-Lao) village of Ban Phran Muan in Udon Thani province in northeastern Thailand. Tambiah's (1970) highly detailed ethnography of the religious tradition found in this village demonstrated, he argued, that the rituals performed by villagers were predicated on premises that were the same as the cosmological Buddhism of the Thai Buddhist textual tradition.

Tambiah would subsequently turn his attention to the history of the relationship between cosmological Buddhism and the Thai polity (see especially Tambiah, 1976 and 1977). I questioned Tambiah's perspective that led him to consider the phenomena studied collectively as a 'total social fact', a perspective that "can be seen as the most recent and perhaps the most sophisticated statement of a type of structuralism which has been developed by a number of British anthropologists, the most notable of whom being Sir Edmund Leach. Yet, for all its sophistication, I believe this approach to be fundamentally inadequate for interpreting the historical patterns of relationship between Buddhism and polity which constitute the subject matter of Tambiah's

inquiry” (Keyes, 1978: 126). My critique notwithstanding, Tambiah’s work must be seen as a highly sophisticated analysis of the persistence of cosmological Buddhism and the significance of this for Thai politics.

There was also other significant anthropological research undertaken beginning in the 1960s by archaeologists. Dr. Chester (Chet) Gorman, who as a student at the University of Hawaii, had gone to Thailand for archaeological research at a site in northeastern Thailand (Noen Nok Tha, Khon Kaen) and then in far northern Thailand (Sprit cave in Mae Hong Son province) was subsequently recruited by the University of Pennsylvania for a project at what was to prove to be one of the richest prehistoric sites in Southeast Asia – namely, Ban Chiang in Udon Thani province. Gorman and his Thai colleague, Pisit Charoenwongsa, electrified the archaeology world after the first excavations and analyses in claiming that they had discovered the oldest known bronze working.<sup>25</sup> This claim was widely disputed and subsequent analysis of the Ban Chiang materials led to a revision in the dating of the finds. Ban Chiang with its extraordinary painted pottery and metallurgy has remained one of the most significant prehistoric sites in Asia. After Gorman’s untimely death from cancer in 1981, He was succeeded at the Penn museum by Joyce White and she has established an impressive reputation as one of the leading prehistorians of Southeast Asia in the world. Although the Ban Chiang project was caught up in politics because of the controversy over the dating of bronze from the site, American archaeologists working in Thailand were not influenced by cold war politics the way other anthropologists working in Thailand were.

## Thai Studies in the US after the Restoration of Democracy in Thailand in the 1990s

Because some ranking members in the Thai military at the time of the 1976 coup – most notably General Kriangsak Chamanan – recognized that draconian military rule was bolstering the appeal of the Communist Party of Thailand, they supported moves to allow a more democratic political process. General Prem Tinsulanonda, who succeeded General Kriangsak as prime minister in 1980, continued such moves. Between 1980 and 1988 an elected parliament was allowed, but General Prem held ultimate authority, acting in the name of the king. “Demi-democracy” was replaced by full parliamentary-democracy beginning in 1988 when Prem allowed a new government to be formed under the leadership of a political party that had won the most seats in parliament.<sup>26</sup> Many in the military were not happy about allowing ‘politicians’ to run the government and in 1991 seized power again. They had not, however, successfully coopted the middle class, and in 1992 a popular uprising took place on the streets of Bangkok. The military junta under General / Prime Minister Suchinda Kraprayoon at first sought to suppress the uprising through force, but as the deaths and injuries mounted the king intervened and summoned General Suchinda and Chamlong Srimuang, the main leader of the uprising, to a highly publicized and televised meeting at the palace. What is remembered as *phritsapha thamin* in Thai and ‘Black May’ in English ended with an acceptance by the military leaders that a democratically elected government could replace the military-led one.

Under the new government there were significant moves to ensure that a democratic system would be instituted. The culmination came in 1997 with the drafting and adoption by popular referendum of what became known as “the peoples’ constitution”. This constitution has been the standard against

which all subsequent constitutions have been compared unfavorably by those favoring a democratic government. With democratic rule once again in place, by the mid and late 1990s a growing number of American scholars felt it was safe to return to Thailand for research.

The new generation of American scholars confronted an American academic environment very different to that that had existed from the late 1940s and into the 1980s. Although there was much more US government funding for overseas research owing to the provisions of Title VI of the Higher Education Act passed by Congress in 1964 and renewed each funding cycle as well as expanded funding from several foundations – notably Ford and Rockefeller – those interested in carrying out research in Thailand now had to compete with students seeking to work not only in East and South Asia but also in other parts of Southeast Asia, including Indonesia again. Although the US did not reestablish diplomatic relations with Vietnam until 1995, scholarly exchanges had begun in the 1980s and by the early 1990s a small, but increasing, number of American researchers started to engage in study in or about Vietnam. As a professor at an institution where there were large numbers of Vietnamese, Khmer, and Lao Americans, I was keenly aware of how student interest in Southeast Asia was shifting from Thailand to the countries of the former Indochina. A lesser but somewhat similar shift began in relationship to Myanmar in the early part of the twenty-first century.

From the late 1980s a number of scholars from American as well as European and Australian universities undertook research on Tai-speaking peoples in China, Vietnam, Laos, or Myanmar as well as those living in Thailand. Interest in Tai living outside of Thailand was also expanding within Thailand as well. In 1993 I participated in a conference in Bangkok on “The State of Knowledge and Directions of Research on Tai Culture” sponsored by the Thai



National Culture Commission and led by Professor Chatthip Nartsupha from Chulalongkorn University. The conference showed that there was increasing research by Thai scholars about the Ahom of Assam, the Shan of Burma, the Lue and Zhuang of China, the Black and White Tai of northern Vietnam, the Lao of Laos, and on Tai groups within Thailand. The conference was held under the patronage of H.R.H. Princess Galyani Vaddhana, the elder sister of King Bhumipol. An audience of nearly 800 college and university faculty, school teachers, journalists, and officials from several ministries came to listen to papers by two dozen scholars, half from Thailand and the remainder from other countries (Australia, China, Germany, India, Japan, Laos, the U.S. and Vietnam).

Interest in Thailand in the cultures of Tai peoples who live outside of Thailand was not in the early 1990s indicative of a revival of the irredentist pan-Thai movement of the late 1930s and 1940s. An underlying motivation for many was to demonstrate by detailed studies of the cultures of Tai peoples that those in Thailand with distinctive Tai cultural heritages should be viewed positively. Thus, the project contributed to an emerging pluralistic view of the Thai nation, although this has still not fully taken place. For some there was a second motivation as they sought to find in the cultures of various Tai groups values such as those promoting harmony within communities and balance between humans and nature that have been seriously eroded in a Thailand that has undergone rapid 'development'.

What most impressed me at the conference was how many scholars from Thailand, including Chatthip Nartsupha (Chulalongkorn University), Anan Ganjanaphan (Chiang Mai University), and Sumitr Pitipatna (Thammasat University) were engaged in significant research on the cultural and social characteristics of Tai peoples. A few American scholars, such as Nicola

Tannenbaum at Lehigh University and Nancy Eberhardt, at Knox College, both carried out research among the Shan in Mae Hong Son province.<sup>27</sup> A larger number of scholars have used research about Tai peoples and ethnic groups in Thailand to reflect on current theoretical ideas about ethnicity and especially about the relationship between ethnic and national culture. I myself have taken a lead in doing so.<sup>28</sup> Several other American or American-trained anthropologists have also contributed to this field through their studies of non-Tai ethnic minorities in Thailand. This group includes Renard (1980), Fink (1994) and Pinkaew Laungaramsri (2000) on Karen, Jonsson (1996, 1998, 2001) on Mien (Yao), Tooker (1996), on Akha, Pine (2002 and 2008) on Lahu, and Prasit Leeprecha (2001, 2008) on Hmong.

In the 1980s area studies became unfashionable in the US as students felt they needed or were encouraged to carry out research from a particular theoretical perspective. Because younger scholars were influenced by such distinctive theoretical approaches as gender and/or women studies, popular culture (film, TV, sports), environmental studies, political-economy studies, as well as those concerned with ethnicity, fewer and fewer students prepared themselves by gaining a wide knowledge of the culture and history of the society in which they intended to carry out research. Arguably the most striking development in studies carried out in Thailand from the 1980s on was the research on women and gender. Several American scholars produced innovative work in this field, including Rosalind Morris (e.g., Morris, 1994) at Columbia, Mary Beth Mills (1999) at Colby College, Ara Wilson (2004) at Duke, and Tamara Loos (2005) at Cornell. Peter Vail, who took his PhD at Cornell, in his study of Thai Boxing (*muai Thai*), a sport that had begun attracting many practitioners in the US, found this sport shaped masculine identity for many in Thailand (Vail, 1994).<sup>29</sup> Cornell continued its role in the development

of the study of gender in Thailand when Armika Fuhrmann was recruited as an assistant professor of Asian studies. Her *Ghostly Desires: Queer Sexuality and Vernacular Buddhism in Contemporary Thai Cinema* is a significant contribution not only to the study of gender in Thailand but also to the study of Thai contemporary film (Fuhrmann, 2016).

Although work in the new array of specializations has tended to eclipse continuing work on the study of religion and society in Thailand, a few scholars persevered even in anthropology departments where such study was no longer fashionable. Significant exceptions to the contemporary anthropological disdain for the study of religious practice have been at Wisconsin and Cornell. Katherine Bowie at Wisconsin, who began her career with work on the political economy of northern Thailand, has more recently focused her attention on the role of Khruba Srivichai, the outstanding and outspoken northern Thai monk of the 1930s and a monk whose influence in northern Thailand is still strong (see Bowie, 2014 and 2017). She has also examined how the *Vessantara Jataka*, arguably the most influential work for practicing Theravada Buddhists, has been incorporated into northern Thai Buddhism (Bowie, 2016, forthcoming). Another American scholar who has contributed significantly to the study of religion and society in Thailand is Leedom Lefferts.<sup>30</sup>

At Cornell, Magnus Fiskesjö, whose own research has focused on the Wa, an Austroasiatic speaking minority found in the borderlands of northern Myanmar and southern China, has furthered the interest in religion and society that had been pioneered by A. Thomas Kirsch, his Cornell predecessor. Fiskesjö guided the PhD committees of several students whose research has been in Thailand or among Tai-speaking peoples. Andrew Johnson, a recent PhD from Cornell and now a professor at Princeton, has emerged as a contemporary successor to those anthropologists (including Kirsch and

myself) who have contributed to Thai studies through an area studies approach. Erik Davis, in his review of Johnson's *Ghosts of the New City: Spirits, Urbanity, and the Ruins of Progress in Chiang Mai* (2014) states that "Johnson sets his work in conversation with multiple disciplines, intersecting at his site: urban studies, postcolonial studies, development, religious studies, and of course anthropology."<sup>31</sup>

The study of religious practice in Thailand and among Tai-speaking peoples has also continued under departments of religion. Justin McDaniel (PhD from Harvard and now professor of religion at the University of Pennsylvania) has taken on the mantle once held by Frank Reynolds and has significantly transformed the study of religion in Thailand with such works as *Gathering Leaves and Lifting Words: Histories of Buddhist Monastic Education in Laos and Thailand* (2008) and *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk* (2011).

Several American scholars have also contributed to the study of the role of Islam in Thailand. Pioneering in this study were Surin Pitsuawan and Suthep Soonthornpasuch, two Thai scholars who took their PhDs at American universities (see Suthep, 1977 and Surin, 1985). Interest in Thai Muslims increased significantly after the democratically elected government of Thaksin Shinawatra, which was in power after the attack on the World Trade towers in New York City on September 11, 2001, decided to ally Thailand closely with the US. This decision alienated some Thai Muslims, especially among the Thai-Malay in southern Thailand. The tension with southern Thai Muslims grew exponentially in 2004 when the Thaksin government authorized military action against Thai-Malay protestors who had taken refuge at the historic Krue Se mosque in Pattani. The killing of more than 30 protestors at Krue Se on May 4, 2004 and the subsequent death in December 2004 of nearly

80 more who were in police custody at Tak Bai in Narathiwat province in southern Thailand deeply angered large numbers of Thai Malay. Since then no Thai government whether democratically elected or in power after a military coup has been able to end a continuing if low level insurgency in southern Thailand. By far the best study of the conflict in southern Thailand is *Tearing Apart the Land: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand* by Duncan McCargo, a British scholar (McCargo, 2009) who has sometimes taught in the US. Michael Jerryson, an American historian of religion has looked specifically at the role of Buddhist monks in the conflict (see Jerryson, 2011). Anusorn Unno, who took his PhD at the University of Washington and is currently dean of the Faculty of Anthropology-Sociology at Thammasat University, wrote a dissertation at the University of Washington that offers deep insights into the conflicted identities of young Thai-Malays (Anusorn Unno, 2010).

Tambiah laid the groundwork for what became in 2012 a formally recognized Thai Studies program at Harvard. This program was founded by a donation from the Thai government and by contributions from leading Thai alumni of Harvard in honor of King Bhumibol's father who had received his medical degree from Harvard.<sup>32</sup> The Thai Studies program at Harvard was initially led by Professor Michael Herzfeld, a British trained anthropologist who despite coming late into Thai studies (his original work was on Greece and Italy) has established himself as one of the leading specialists on Thailand (see, for example, Herzfeld, 2010). The program has been subjected to criticism, especially since the coup of 2014.<sup>33</sup> By seeking speakers that are picked not only from those favored by the Thai elite, the program has succeeded in becoming more balanced than it seemed it would be at the outset. A search has been underway for a year as of October 2016 to find a replacement for Herzfeld who has retired from Harvard.

## Return of Military Rule

Although elected governments held legitimate power between the late 1990s and 2006, it is very apparent that the military and many within the bureaucracy and the urban middle class considered politicians to use power for corrupt reasons. In 2006 the military once again intervened, but despite replacing the 1997 constitution with a more restrictive one, elections were again permitted and the populist party founded by Thaksin Shinawatra but under a new name, and a surrogate leader gained the most seats and formed a new government. For the next eight years politics in Thailand were deeply contested between the populists and those who wanted a more elite-centered government. In 2014 the military sought to bring this contest to a final end with what they hoped was a conclusive coup and the rewriting of the constitution once again to preclude ‘corrupt politicians’ (that is, the populist supporters of Thaksin) from ever again being able to gain power.

The US government was critical of this effort, but it had lost influence in Thailand. Most American scholars working on Thailand have also been critical of the efforts of the Thai military-bureaucratic elite supported by the middle class to prevent the return of electoral democracy that would favor the populists. Since the early twenty-first century, fewer and fewer American graduate students have chosen to study Thailand. Moreover the number of Thai coming to study social sciences and humanities in America is at its lowest it has been in the past half century.

Nonetheless, Thai studies in America will not disappear. The impressive Thai collections at libraries at Cornell, Wisconsin, Northern Illinois University, and the University of Washington and smaller collections elsewhere ensure that there will continue to be a significant scholarly legacy for Thai studies in the United States. Future scholars – from Thailand, the US and elsewhere

will be able to find in these collections significant materials for future research. Moreover, interest in Thailand by new generations of students will, I believe, not be shrouded in Cold War politics or determined by the political contests in Thailand.

Finally, I want to add a personal note. This essay is very much a product of my own engagement with scholarship – American, Thai, and other – about Thailand. I am sure I have inadvertently overlooked some aspects that others will consider central or forgotten to include reference to several significant scholars. I can only end by asking forgiveness (ขออภัย) from anyone who feels I have slighted or misrepresented them.

## Endnotes

- 1 I am very grateful for comments made on previous drafts of this paper by Thak Chaloemtiarana, Craig Reynolds, William Klausner, Jane Keyes and Thongchai Winichakul. I am, nonetheless, responsible for all reflections and conclusions in this paper. As I was preparing this paper, I was sent a 2016 Thailand Research Fund report by Kēngkit Kitirianglāp (แก่งกิจ กิติเรียงลาภ), entitled รายงานวิจัยฉบับสมบูรณ์: โครงการ มานุษยวิทยาจักรวรรดิ: การประดิษฐ์ “หมู่บ้านชนบท” และกำเนิดมานุษยวิทยาไทยในยุคสงครามเย็น (“Imperialist Anthropology: The Invention of the ‘Rural Village’ and the Origins of Anthropology in the Cold War”). I have not yet had time to work fully through this interesting paper, but recognize it is very relevant to what I have written about.
- 2 Ratana Boonmathaya (1997), Pattana Kitiarsa (1999), Suchada Thaweessit (2000), Pinkaew Laungaramsri (2000), Prasit Leepreecha (2001), Chingchai Methaphat (2010), and Anusorn Unno (2010).

- 3 Goolsby (1994), Van Fleet (1998), Weisman (2000), Cuasay (2002), and Pine (2002). Jan Weisman, who had been a Peace Corps Volunteer in Kalasin in Northeastern Thailand, had a career that ended too early and tragically. After becoming one of the first African-Americans to undertake fieldwork in Thailand and finishing her impressive dissertation on *lūk krūng* (Eurasian children) in Thailand, developed breast cancer and died not long after she defended her dissertation.
- 4 These include Yukti Mukdawijitra and Thanapol Limapichart who received their PhDs from Wisconsin in 2007 and 2008 respectively. Yukti did his dissertation research among ethnic Thai in Vietnam (Yukti Mukdawijitra, 2007) while Thanapol (2008) dissertation was an anthropological analysis of Thai literature. Yukti felt compelled to take refuge in Wisconsin after the military coup of 2014.
- 5 On Thai academic reaction to Trump's election, see <http://www.khaosodenglish.com/politics/2016/11/09/thailand-can-expect-less-interest-president-trump-academics-say/>.
- 6 Mary Haas was one of a number of linguists who were recruited during World War II to study Asian languages and "produce practical handbooks, teaching grammars and vocabularies, as quickly as possible" (Matisoff, 1997). Haas's "practical handbook" for Thai became *Spoken Thai*, first published in 1948 and then in 1954 in the edition that would become used by generations of American students (Haas and Heng R. Subhanka, 1954). It was the text I was assigned at Cornell in the late 1950s when I began my own study of Thai.



- 7      Gedney had first began work on Thai while working during World War II with the Army Language Unit in anticipation of being one of a cadre of Americans prepared to assist in the postwar (and postcolonial) reconstruction of Asia (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_J.\\_Gedney](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_J._Gedney)). Although Gedney published little, he trained most of the linguists who in the 1970s and 1980s taught Thai in the US and guided most of the early work among American scholars on the study of Tai languages and dialects. His 1967 paper, "Thailand and Laos," in *Linguistics in East Asia and South East Asia* set the stage for this work.
- 8      Heine-Geldern had been trained in the *kulturkreis* (cultural circles) approach to the study of cultures. Unlike the Anglo-American approach in the prewar period that approached the study of culture on the assumption that peoples perpetuated through time the same cultural patterns, the *kulturkreis* approach emphasized that cultures were embedded in history and were thus shaped by varying historical patterns. Although Sharp did not accept the 'diffusionist' approach that the *kulturkreis* approach advocated, he always emphasized that different historical processes must be taken into account in understanding any cultural tradition. He had fled Nazi-occupied Austria and spent several years during the War in New York.
- 9      The publications resulting from the Bang Chan project number in the hundreds. Many are listed in the bibliography of *Bang Chan: Social History of a Rural Community in Thailand* (Sharp and Hanks, 1978).
- 10     See my obituary of Lucien Hanks (Keyes, 1989). Jane Hanks's "Reflections on the Ontology of Rice" and *Maternity and Its Rituals in Bang Chan* (1960) are recognized by most Thai specialists as seminal in the study of gender in Thai society.
- 11     See <https://iu.edu/~iunews/blogs/southeast-asia2012/2012/05/21/iu-and-thailand-historical-ties-new-opportunities/>.
- 12     See especially Moerman (1965).

- 13 I had benefitted from having seen Klausner's 1956 *Progress Reports* on work in Nong Khon Village, Ubon Province) before seeing any of his published work. See Klausner (1966, 1972, 1993).
- 14 <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v10/d132>.
- 15 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project\\_Camelot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_Camelot)
- 16 Wakin (1992) has provided a detailed account of the "Thailand Controversy".
- 17 Hjorleifur Jonsson, who took his PhD in anthropology at Cornell in 1996 has published a long reflection on the controversy. He opens by saying that "I do not presume to resolve the matter in this article, but I hope to make the issue comprehensible by moving outside the framework of antagonistic debates and offering comparative perspectives on the case" (Jonsson, 2014: 265). That he should feel compelled to do so more than forty years after the controversy began is indicative of how it still continues to have continuing influence on Thai studies in the US.
- 18 See, in this regard, my "The Anthropology of Thailand and the Study of Social Conflict" (Keyes, 2006).
- 19 Although only a few in the student movement in Thailand in the early 1970s had studied in the US, they included such prominent activists as Boonsanong Punyodyana who had taken his PhD in sociology at Cornell and had first taught at Thammasat University. After he assumed the leadership of the Socialist Party of Thailand, he was murdered in 1976 (see Keyes, 1977). Boonsanong was the lead speaker at a seminar organized about a month before the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, 1973, by students in Faculty of Social Science at Chiang Mai University, in which I also participated.
- 20 See Nicholas Farrelly, "Interview with Thak Chaloemtiarana," *New Mandala*, October 29, 2007.
- 21 His book began as a 1974 dissertation at Cornell, was first published in Thailand in 1979 and published in Thai translation in 2005, and was then reissued in English in 2007.

- 22 <http://divinity.yale.edu/alumni/alumni-awards/award-recipients/frank-e-reynolds-1955-bd>.
- 23 In translating *Three Worlds According to King Ruang: A Thai Buddhist Cosmology*, Reynolds collaborated with his Thai wife, Mani.
- 24 The term ‘socially engaged Buddhism’ is especially associated with the Thai intellectual, Sulak Sivaraksa. Some American scholars have been influenced by Sulak (see Chappell, 2003).
- 25 See Pisit Charoenwongsa (1982); also see Rainey (1981). White’s “Emergence of Cultural Diversity in Mainland Southeast Asia: a View from Prehistory” (White, 2011) gives a good sense of her significant scholarship.
- 26 The term ‘demi-democracy’ was coined by the Thai political scientist, Likhit Dhiravegin (1992).
- 27 See Tannenbaum (1996) and Eberhardt (2006).
- 28 See Keyes (1966, 1976, 1979, 1992, 1995, 2002).
- 29 Vail has spent most of his post-PhD career teaching at the National University of Singapore. The significance of *muai Thai* for shaping masculine identity among Thai boys raised upcountry was expanded on by my former student, Pattana Kittiaras (2005) whose premature death was a great loss to Thai studies.
- 30 Although Lefferts began his career with research on society in rural Khon Kaen (see Lefferts, 1974), his more recent work has focused on art and Buddhism (see Lefferts and Cate, 2012 and Lefferts, Cate and Wayuphā Thotsā, 2012).
- 31 Erik W. Davis, “Review: Andrew Johnson’s “Ghosts of the New City”, <https://erikwdavis.wordpress.com/2015/10/28/review-andrew-johnsons-ghosts-of-the-new-city/>. Also see Johnson (2011, 2013).

- 32 Among the Thai who had taken advanced degrees at Harvard was Surin Pisuwan whose dissertation was on the Malays of Southern Thailand (Surin, 1985). He served as Thailand's foreign minister from 1997 to 2001 and subsequently as Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) from 2008 to 2013.
- 33 See Ilya Garger, "Trouble with Thai Studies," *The Harvard Crimson*, August 18, 2014 (<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2014/8/18/harvard-thai-troubles/>).

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