



“Dedications to Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana Krom Luang Naradhiwas Rajanagarindra on her 80th birthday,” published by the Siam Society, is a 255-page book that was offered to Princess Galyani Vadhana on the auspicious occasion of her eightieth birthday. Her Royal Highness, who is the elder sister of the current Monarch of Thailand, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, has been interested in the history and culture of Thailand throughout her life, and has been Honorary President of the Siam Society since 1984. It is appropriate that she should be honoured by the publication and gift of such a book, which should be a must-have item for collectors.

“Dedications” is a hardcover book, bound in smart-looking, green-black snakeskin leather, complete with gold-rimmed pages and several glossy-coloured photos. The book is comprised of fourteen articles – twelve in the English language, and one each in Thai and French – and covers a wide variety of subjects. These articles were written by statesmen and noted scholars who work in the field of Thai studies.

There are three reflection/recollection articles, the first of which was the script of a brief but informative May 2001 speech given by H.E. General Prem Tinsulanonda (President of the Privy Council to the King) in Washington, D.C. The speech focuses on the author’s perspective of Thailand’s social, political, and

economic progress under the guidance of the present Thai king. The second article is by C. F. W. Higham, and is a reflection on the author’s thirty-three years of archaeological research in Thailand. The writer discusses his participation in several excavations, and reflects on the common themes he found in the archaeological research projects that he had been involved in. The third is a vivid personal reflection by Sirichai Narumitrekagarn on the physical and social conditions of an area in Bangkok called Thung Bangkokpi (around the Siam Society building) in the mid-1930s. The article is well illustrated with a diagram and photographs.



“Dedications” contains four articles on inscriptions. The first is written in Thai by Therm Meetem, and is about how the culture of Thailand can be traced using inscriptions. The article examines thirteen inscriptions that were written in Palawa (early inscriptions were written in this Indian language). Apart from

translating the inscriptions, explaining what they mean, and dating them, the author also lists recently published books on the study of inscriptions, and supplies a chart that compares modern Thai language with Palawa. The second piece, by Michael Wright, questions the authenticity of Inscription I, specifically the modern language that is found in Inscription I. Wright argues that while all the other Inscriptions are ancient documents, Inscription I is an “extremely scholarly 19th century imitation”. He hypothesizes on why Inscription

I has been accepted as genuine, with a parallel discussion on counterfeit English artefacts, in a comparative study. The third article by Olivier Bernon is written in French. Bernon examines the inscriptions on Vatt Buddha-ghosacary in Phnom Penh. Lastly, Hans Penth discusses the inscriptions on an inscribed Buddha image that an art historian presented to the Archive of Lan Na Inscriptions; the article contains a photo of the inscribed Buddha image and the Thai and English translations of the inscriptions.

There are two articles that examine and question past archaeological finds. Peter Skilling looks at Dvāravatī, which he defines as a state located in the lower and central Chao Phraya plain. He discusses the discoveries of Dvāravatī, the definition of Dvāravatī, recent literature on the state, and raises questions about the future of Dvāravatī studies. In the second article, Priya Krairiksh focusses on the current interpretations of the Chedi Sri Suriyothai in Ayutthaya. The author offers clarifications, and makes an argument on the origins of Chedi Sri Suriyothai. Both articles contain extensive reference sections.

There are articles in "Dedications" that look at the history of Thailand from relatively unknown sources. Dhiravat na Pombejra examines what published historical sources state happened in the Thasai Prince's Rebellion and the aftermath of it, using an unpublished Dutch primary source. The article shows how unpublished sources actually contain a wealth of information



on the politics of the era after 1629. In the second article, Michael Smithies reproduces a rare anonymous pamphlet, published in London in 1690, that discusses the "revolution" of 1688 in Siam. The pamphlet states that it was written by the French, and was translated into English (old English). The discovery and publication of this pamphlet may prove to become a beneficial primary source for researchers.

The last three articles of the publication concentrate on the arts, culture, and theoretical ideas. M.R. Chakrarot Chitrabongs demonstrates how the use of photography can enhance what we know about the history and culture of a society. The author discusses the utility of panoramas and enlarged photos. He states that old photos, in combination with advanced technology, should be used alongside traditional research methods because "photographs do not lie", and much information can be gained from them. In the second article, Sumet Jumsai examines how the stage sets were produced for the Mae Naak opera that premiered on January 6, 2003, in Bangkok. The article reflects on stage design, the use of Thai murals, cut-outs, and the role of colour. Lastly, Chetana Nagavajara queries whether Thailand has indigenous theories, revealing that some individuals have argued that theory is not an integral part of the thinking process that Thais are used to, and that there is no tangible set of theories in Thailand. He counters that theory is not alien to Thailand, and that Thailand has more implicit rather than explicit indigenous theories. The author points to the various arts, as examples, to demonstrate this.

The book, as a whole, consists of articles that are studies in many aspects of Thailand. The articles vary in format and approach; some are papers of reflection while others are analytical. The varying content and format make the book both an easy and enjoyable read.

I believe that "Dedications," in part or in full, is a successful resource tool for academics in the different areas of Thai studies. The articles are written in a way that would stimulate and inspire young students in Thai studies as well as build on the fact that analytical thought and reflection are two essential building blocks for study and work. "Dedications," however, is not merely for the academically oriented. It is, for the general public, an enlightening read on the fascinating world of Thai archeology, arts, and culture. Upon finishing the book, I was inspired to think about all the important artefacts still to be discovered, how photographs taken today might serve as historical evidence for archaeologists in the future, and how important the contribution of personal reflection/recollection is on research.

The reviewer, Soni Desai, had been asked to describe and comment on the above book after reading it. She is trained in the fields of sociology and criminology, and is a Canadian intern at SEAMEO-SPAFA for six months.