Within and Beyond the Boundaries:  
Anthropological Studies of Mainland Southeast Asia since the 1950s  

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Insofar as "ethnic groups"- which have supposedly been the units of study in anthropology - reside across national boundaries, there is no theoretical reason why researchers should stop their inquiries at the border. Yet in the modern world of nation states, both those who live within such boundaries, and we the researchers, are constrained by our national background, as well as by the conditions that prevail on both sides of the border. Nowhere have the constraints of national boundaries produced such starkly differentiated conditions of research for field-based social scientists than in mainland Southeast Asia during the last half century. The presence of national boundaries and the resulting wars and conflicts have conditioned and deterred on-site research in many of the countries in this area. Thus, even though the study of an area such as mainland Southeast Asia needs to be carried out across national boundaries because of the wide distribution of religious traditions and ethno-linguistic populations, and even though there are many topics and theories which have been investigated across such boundaries as I shall point out below, anthropological work and the kinds of questions asked have, in many respects, been determined by these national boundaries, resulting in differences in the amount and depth of research carried out, as well as in some of the most important themes. Thailand has been by far the most accessible country in this region but, in some other countries, field-based research has only recently begun to re-flourish.

In this review article, therefore, I generally deal with each country in turn, but I will also discuss issues that transcend national boundaries. In the past decade, we have also seen an increasing number of attempts to bring together findings from areas divided by national
boundaries. In the final section, I discuss recent strategies to deal with cross-border situations, as well as to make the frontiers themselves the subject of inquiry.

Throughout the last half-century, the questions brought to the field by Japanese scholars in this area, together with their research results, have been influenced and stimulated by the works of western scholars. As I shall explain below, the shifts in the basic paradigms in anthropological thought, as well as particular frameworks that have arisen from this specific area over the past four decades, are also reflected in Japanese scholarship, although there are also some trends that are peculiarly Japanese.

The list of works discussed here is in fact a third of the size of that which I initially prepared. In the case of Thailand in particular I have cut down the list considerably, not so much due to the sheer amount of research produced, but because there are already fairly comprehensive bibliographies available. On the other hand, I have also tried to include research by scholars currently providing fresh and very much needed information on fields that are newly opening up. While most of the studies are by anthropologists and based on field research, I will also mention studies from other disciplines which have influenced work by anthropologists, as well as studies based on fieldwork by scholars in other disciplines which are comparable to those of anthropologists. Despite this, there remain many important works that have not been mentioned due to limitations of space and the enormity of the task.

Pioneers: The 1950s and Early 1960s

Post-war research in this area began in the late 1950s. In this period, anthropological work in Japan was influenced either by the kulturkreis school of ethnology or by the studies of social structure in social anthropology. Both of these schools had an interest in comparisons with Japanese culture and society. Obayashi has written on a wide range of topics, including mythology, kinship organization (Obayashi 1978), and beliefs, and rituals, from an ethnological perspective based mainly on documentary sources, but also on field surveys (e.g. Obayashi 1964). In 1957, the Japanese Society of Ethnology sent a team of scholars led by Matsumoto on an expedition to Thailand to study the culture of the rice-cultivating peoples of Southeast Asia. The team consisted of an agronomist, a linguist, an archeologist, a material culture specialist, and three ethnologists, and their reports appeared in special issues of the Japanese Journal of Ethnology.

Matsumoto depicted the pre-Hindu-Buddhist cultures of Indochina as a complex of rice-cultivating hill and plain cultures (1959). Iwata, Ayabe, and

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1 Shigeharu Tanabe introduces research on Tai societies in Japanese Anthropological Research on Tai Ethnic Groups in Thai Research Trends in Japan (ed. Hashimoto Takashi). State of Thai Studies in Japan, (1996). Kitahara and Akagi (eds).includes a section on anthropology which is a bibliographical survey. A forthcoming issue of Tai Culture is a compilation of works by Japanese scholars, and includes an introduction by Ryoko Nishii which is an overview of Japanese anthropological scholarship on Thai-Tai cultures.

2 Volume 23 No. 1-2, 1959; Volume 29, 1964 vol. 2; Matsumoto (ed)1965.
Shiratori, who were members of the team, subsequently became pioneer researchers in this region in their own right.

Based on his first fieldwork in Laos, Iwata (1959) analyzed social organization in a village in relation to its migration pattern, claiming that "loose structure," then a subject of much debate among American scholars, should be understood not so much as an essential characteristic of the Thai-Lao people, but as a result of their migratory lifestyle. He was also concerned with gathering data to enable meticulous cross-cultural comparisons to be made in relation to rice cultivation technology (Iwata 1963) or kinship and the family. He pointed out the presence of both patrilineal as well as bilateral kin groups in the area (Iwata 1964b, 1965), drawing comparisons with other Tai societies, as well as with Japan. He rejected previous models of "plural" or "dual" societies, and called instead for a field-based approach in understanding the processes whereby traditional society is transformed from tribe to nation, as ethnic groups are incorporated into the nation state (Iwata 1964a, 1965).

Iwata was also one of the pioneers of the study of minority groups (Iwata 1971). Following his work, substantial ethnographic research on the non-Thai ethnic minorities in the hills began, in the 1960s and 1970s. From 1963, Iijima conducted fieldwork in two Sgaw Karen villages, one in the hills and one in the valley, and wrote a pioneering monograph comparing them. This not only provided data on social organization and religious beliefs, but also discussed the processes of ecological adaptation, national integration, and accompanying social and cultural changes (Iijima 1965, 1975, 1979).

Shiratori organized a team from Sophia University to study the hill minorities between 1969 and 1974, especially the Hmong and Mien of northwestern Thailand, resulting in a pictorial volume (Shiratori 1978). Takemura, a member of the Shiratori team, later studied Yao-Mien ethnic identity, social organization, and mythology (Takemura 1981, 1991). He also studied the Akha patrilineal linkage system from a comparative perspective (1980). Both the Akha and Yao have patrilineal kinship systems, and Takemura was interested in comparing the Yao, who have a written genealogy, with the Akha, for whom descent provides a basis for identity and ethnic solidarity. Iijima and Takemura together set high standards for subsequent studies of ethnic groups in the region.

Ayabe, a social anthropologist, also began fieldwork in Laos. He wrote a monograph on villages in Thailand and Laos, in which he looked at the societies in relation to social organization, religion, and change. He compared cultural change, urbanization, and modernization on both sides of the border (1965). Later he extended his comparative research on the Tai by looking at the distribution of patrilineal and matrilineal institutions, and put forward hypotheses on the way in which these had developed among the Tai peoples. He was also concerned with the "loose structure" argument, suggesting that while the level of social organization is weak, there is a tendency to form small groups flexibly, according to necessity (1973b). He saw that in Laos, the temples-and, increasingly the primary schools-were becoming the centers for village level social integration (1959). The major topics in his work were the function and role of Buddhism as an integrating social force, and personal
relationships as important principles of social organization (1971, 1973a,b).

Mizuno pioneered the study of village social organization, based on long-term fieldwork in Dong Daeng village in northeast Thailand in 1964-66. He made a careful study of the family cycle in relation to the pattern of land ownership and land use. He showed the significance of the family (which was basically nuclear), the multi-household compound (based on agricultural cooperation between the households of parents and children), and the bilateral kindred. He pointed out that social relationships were founded not so much on the collectivity or the individual as on a network of dyadic ties. This provided important as the framework for subsequent studies in social organization in Southeast Asia by Japanese scholars. In the first substantial piece of fieldwork by a Japanese scholar to deal with the loose structure argument, Mizuno's primary interest was in ascertaining the principles of social organization in Thai society, taking note of socioeconomic changes and different modes of adaptation to land fragmentation (Mizuno 1978a, 1978b, 1982).

Starting in the 1960s, the work of the historian Ishii was a stimulus to scholars in other disciplines, including anthropologists concerned with Theravada Buddhism and with the process of national integration in Thailand. Through his interest in the development of the Buddhist sangha and its relationship with kingship and the Thai state, Ishii became interested in millennial cults (Ishii 1975a, 1975b), as well as the modern role of the sangha in national integration (Ishii 1973, 1986).

Thus, by the late 1960s, a start had been made by these scholars who emphasized the importance of fieldwork and the comparative perspective. They were pioneers both in providing basic data, and also in opening up new perspectives that challenged or attempted to add new dimensions to existing studies. These pioneers in the late 1950s and early 1960s were not greatly constrained by national boundaries. However, the situation changed from the mid-1960s, when the possibilities of fieldwork in every country in the region except Thailand became more limited.

Another point to note in this period was that institutional backing for research in Southeast Asia began to develop in Japan, with, for instance, the founding of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University in 1963. Its interdisciplinary staff included agronomists, soil scientists, and ecologists, as well as social scientists. During the 1960s and 1970s members of the Center produced landmark studies. They included Iijima, Ishii, and Mizuno, whose work was also published in English-language journals.³ Research in Southeast Asia was often carried out as part of a multi-disciplinary project by a group of scholars whose individual interests complemented each other: examples are the research by Shiratori of Sophia University on the Yao-Mien in northern Thailand, by Ayabe of Kyushu University on Thai rural education, by Ishii of Kyoto University on Dong Daeng, by Ogiwara of Kagoshima University on Myanmar, and, more recently, by Sakurai on Vietnam.

Thailand

1 The 1970s and 1980s: Social Structure, Religious Systems and Ethnic Groups

Throughout this period, the major concerns in anthropology were with social structure, religious systems, and symbolism. For these it was appropriate and convenient to base research on a single village, or a single "culture." The dominant question was the nature of Thai society and culture, as seen through Thai social structure, religion (both spirit cults and Buddhism), and cosmology. The main trends in western scholarship were reflected in the Japanese studies, such as the concern with the "loose structure" of Thai society, the relationship between various elements of religious beliefs and practices such as in the great tradition and little tradition models, and subsequent discussions of the relationship between Buddhism and spirit beliefs.

Village Studies: Social Structure, Ecology and Land

Almost fifteen years after Mizuno's initial research, a multi-disciplinary team of researchers from the Center of Southeast Asian Studies, funded by the Ministry of Education and led by Ishii, carried out follow-up research in the same village. The team consisted of environmental scientists, agronomists, geographers, economists, sociologists, and anthropologists. In the introduction to the journal issue based on this project (Fukui 1985), it was stated that it began as an interdisciplinary attempt to overcome the limitations of the "one-man, one-village, one-year study" (Fukui 1993). The work of the participants appeared in numerous volumes, including one edited by Ishii (1978). According to his introduction, this was an "interdisciplinary approach to a society where rice-production is not only an economic basis for the life of the people but has greatly affected the history, social structure, and land tenure." Another volume edited by Kuchiba (1990) focused on the interpretation of values and cosmology, topics not dealt with in the more ecologically oriented volumes or in the original work of Mizuno.

A group of scholars from Kyushu University, including Ayabe (see above), began a project on educational anthropology and Thai rural development in 1970. Ayabe (1973a) stressed the importance of the dek wat (temple boys) in linking the Buddhist clergy to lay society. Maruyama, another member of the same group, focused on temple and school committees, as well as on family childrearing practices and the Thai mode of thought (Maruyama 1973).

Kitahara, a sociologist, has written extensively on the historical development of rural Thai society, in relation to topics such as the changes following the introduction of surnames in 1913, the development of land ownership, and peasant movements (Kitahara 1990). Tomosugii provided a valuable account of the local economy as well as the wider economic history of Thailand in its socio-cultural context, combining an interest in economics with symbolic analysis. In his earlier work he combined the ethnography of village life with a special focus on land ownership and peasant organization, within a wider understanding of
Thai social structure, values and beliefs, and economic history (Tomosugi 1980). In a more recent study, he looked at the formation of Bangkok, reading historical memory into the urban landscape of the city (Tomosugi 1993).

Tanabe's earlier works in northern Thailand discussed social organization in relation to irrigation systems (Tanabe 1976, see also Tanabe 1994). He pursued the ecological and historical development of irrigation in the Chiang Mai basin, and analyzed cultural and social relationships pertaining to irrigation, pointing out the tightly structured social organization lying behind the irrigation-based ecological adaptation.

The Religious System, Ritual and Symbolism

Many anthropologists entering the field in the 1970s were interested in analyzing Thai religious systems as a way of understanding Thai society and culture, with varying degrees of emphasis on Buddhism and spirit cults. This undoubtedly reflected the symbolic interpretative approach of the time. Studies of Theravada Buddhism were influenced by Leach, in looking at Buddhism as a practical religion, as well as by the work of scholars such as Tambiah and Kirsch, who considered Buddhism in relation to non-Buddhist traditions.

Aoki sought to understand Thai society and Thai cognition through looking at Buddhist ritual and cosmology (1974, 1980). Based on his own experience as a monk in a Bangkok temple, he described monastic life and Buddhist practices, the role of Buddhism in Thai society (1976), and the forms and classification of Buddhist rituals (1975). Mori, who began fieldwork in the 1970s, combined field research with documentary and historical work. For example, he pursued the changes in the Thu Nam ceremony in order to analyze changes in the conceptualization of kingship between the Thai notion of king as patriarch and Hindu deva raja kingship (1967). He also analyzed Chau Phou worship as a modern manifestation of Thai culture in the urban context, relating it to dissatisfaction towards existing religious leaders among city-dwellers (1974). In the late 1990s, Moribe published a set of papers based on research carried out over two decades (Moribe 1998). In his early work in this volume, he laid emphasis on Buddhist texts and monkhood in understanding Thai Buddhism in the social and cultural context of local Buddhist practice. His more recent work in the same volume dealt with the role of Buddhism in political and social trends, such as the study of Buddhadasa, or the relationship between rural monasteries and national integration.

Kajiwara entered the field in 1975, and studied northern Thai rituals through village fieldwork. He rejected the binary nature of Buddhism and animism, together with explanations using terms such as "syncretism" or "great" and "little" traditions, claiming that such concepts concealed more than they revealed when looking at the rituals and religious consciousness of the people (1977).

Onozawa's first research was in 1974, one result of which was a study of the religious system from a village perspective. Here he pointed out, through an examination of the Buddhist ordination ceremony, that individualism and collectivism were interchangeable guiding principles, despite claims that Thai society had a loose structure or was not bound by...
collective principles (Onozawa 1978). He also analyzed a village tham khwan ritual (1993). He looked at the religious belief system at the village level in the light of the work of Tambiah and Kirsch, claiming that the villagers' cosmology was flexible rather than centered on Buddhism. He pointed out that Buddhism itself has a dual structure, with a division between orthodox Buddhism, which corresponds to the Buddhism of the center related to kingship, and the popular Buddhism of the village.

Numerous scholars have written on northern Thai ancestral cults. Sugiyama conducted research in a northern Thai village from 1973. His focus derived from a comparative interest in the intersection of social organization and ritual in wet-rice growing societies. He described and compared in detail two rituals performed for deceased relatives: ancestor worship, and Buddhist merit-making for the deceased (Sugiyama 1976). He saw the two not as mutually exclusive but complementary; the one providing this-worldly benefits and being performed mostly by women, and the other being an occasion for merit-making. Kajiwara also looked at northern Thai ancestor worship, critically reviewing previous western work on the issue. He claimed that the cult is characterized by an ambivalent attitude towards the ancestors, and that it plays many roles in relation to various aspects of northern Thai society such as kinship, folklore, ritual, cosmology and gender roles. It should be analyzed as such rather than explained in simple functionalistic terms (1983).

More recently, Takai argued that, rather than look at ancestor worship simply as a ritual of the matrilineal group, we should look at it as a form of spirit cult and thus see it as a ritual that constitutes and maintains order in the family. He also investigated processes of change and revitalization in these rituals (1991). Later he looked at changes in the concept of spirits in various institutions, from ancestral ritual to the medium cults in Chiang Mai (1992). Kawano (1993) also wrote on the spirit possession dance, noting that, whereas in Buddhism women are deemed inferior because of their weakness, in the spirit cult the weakness becomes the reason for women's primacy, and the cult provides an idiom of physical connection between related kinswomen. In a similar vein, Kato (1999) considered mo lam pii faa, the dancing female spirit medium in northeast Thailand, as providing a religious focus for women.

Ethnicity and the Study of Minority Peoples

Anthropological studies of ethnicity in Mainland Southeast Asia including Thailand in this period were also concerned with the position of ethnic minorities against the background of national integration, looking at cultural and social changes in the local minority communities through field research.

Ichikawa's work (1967) was the first substantial ethnographic study of overseas Chinese in Mainland Southeast Asia. In place of studies at the level of policy or explanations in terms of assimilation, he proposed looking at the details of social structure and cultural values. Yoshihara studied urban Chinese religion in Bangkok (1997). Onozawa studied overseas Chinese in a provincial town, pointing out that though the Chinese had assimilated in terms
of language and religion, yet in other respects they firmly maintained their identity as a privileged group (1976b). He also studied Malay-speaking Muslims in the south where Thai language education by the state was resisted by Malay Muslims for whom language is crucial to religion (1985). More recent long-term research on ethnic relations in the south is that of Nishii who studied the historical emergence and transformation of the peripheral identities of the Thai-speaking Muslims on the Thai-Malaysian border, analyzing the dynamic process by which the Sam Sam category emerged from the Thai-Malay context (Nishii 1991, 1992).

After a period of absence following the Shiratori expedition, resulting in accounts of the Yao-Mien (e.g. Tsunemi 1980 on migration and the process of village formation), the northern Thai hills received a second wave of Japanese scholars, starting from the mid-1980s and continuing until the present. Based on research among the Hmong, Furuie reconsidered the category of "hill tribes," introducing a locally based alternative to the state-centered view of the relationships that exist among the hill dwellers (1993). Yoshimatsu(aka Yamamoto) studied traditional rituals among the Karen and changes in their agricultural rites accompanying the shift from dry rice to wet rice cultivation (1991). Hayami studied the religious and social transformation accompanying the spread of Christianity and Buddhism among the Karen within the context of national integration (1994,1999). A more recent study of Lahu Christianity along similar issues is presented by Nishimoto (2000). Maeda studied the legal system of the Lawa, providing valuable data on a group on which there was little previous research (1988). Yoshino looked at Mien-Yao migration processes and ritual, including the priesthood and Chinese script system associated with it, in relation to ethnic identity (1994, 1995). Ayabe discusses Lisu ethnicity in terms of relationship between ethnic ascription and clan ideology (1999).

Turning to ethnicity among the lowland Tai, Baba has been working among the Tai Lue in northern Thailand since 1990, having previously carried out historical research on the Tai Lue in Sipsongpanna. His focus in northern Thailand is on the changes in oral and musical traditions (1996), as well as the guardian spirit cults. He discusses the transformation in the cults in relation to the memories of their migration from Yunnan, now that the Tai Lue are well situated in Thai society, and also in relation to present-day rural development and the creation of tradition (1995).

Thus, we see a surge of interest in ethnicity as a topic from the 1980s, including changing relations among ethnic groups in the national context, both in the hills as well as in the plains.

2 From System to Ideology: From Village Structure to National Integration

In between Tanabe's earlier work on irrigation and social organization and his later work on the formation of ritual and ideology, he organized a symposium at the Ethnological Museum in 1982 on the history of peasant consciousness. In his paper from the resulting volume (Tanabe 1984), based on an historical analysis of peasant rebellion in Thailand, he developed the concept of ideological practice in order to understand the emergence of critical
consciousness and ideology in relation to structural changes in society. This was an attempt
to overcome static symbolic analysis, and was a stepping-stone to his subsequent studies. His
interests in the 1980s centered primarily on the formation of ideology through ritual processes
such as funerary rites (1980) or spirit cults, viewing ritual not as a reflection of culture or
cosmology, but as an ideological process. Taking up the much-studied ancestor cults in the
north (see above section), he analyzed the construction of female gender (1991). The
ambivalence towards women is revealed through the ritual processes of sacrifice and spirit-
possession, in which the superiority of women and matriliney are emphasized, along with the
authority of elders represented by the transcendental ancestor spirits. His work on the *Pa
Sae Nya Sae* ritual (1993) begins with a structural analysis of the ritual process of sacrifice
and spirit possession, which used to be a state-level ritual in northern Thailand. He then
shows how the power represented by the spirit is transformed through the ritual process, and
how it relates to political power. He is also concerned with the construction of knowledge
pertaining to the spirit in social and historical contexts, pointing out the dissonance between
native and historically constructed discourses concerning the ritual. Through performance of
the ritual, the social order and the power of those who embody that order are legitimated.

In northeast Thailand, Hayashi (1989) presented a picture of *mo tham* (lay ritual
practitioners) in relation to local and state Buddhism, using an approach which differs from
Tambiah's structural analysis based on research in the same region. Hayashi makes a
conscious attempt to overcome the view of local religion as a closed system. *Mo tham* and the
protective power of *thamma* are seen as ideological formations that realize male authority
within authentic Buddhist lay practice, and in the hierarchy of the politico-religious power of
the state. Subsequently, he extended the same approach to religion in Theravada Buddhist
countries, not as a complementary or a contrastive system of spirits versus Buddhism, but as
a dynamic relationship between laity, *sangha*, and practical religion to be analyzed in each
specific locality against the background of the state. He has also written on Buddhism and
development, the new Buddhist movements and meditation, and commercialized Buddhism
and monastic scandals in the context of social change today (1991a, 1997). Another Work
considered the relationship between Buddhism and the legitimation of kingship, reflecting
especially on the role of the present king in development, against the background of national
integration and development from the 1960s (Hayashi 1991b). In addition to these works, he
has recently published a monograph on Lao religious practices (2000).

3 Thailand *In Globalization: Center and Periphery in Flux*

While development and national integration have proceeded in Thailand since the 1960s,
the economic boom in the 1980s brought about accelerated changes in Thai society.
Industrialization, the market economy, and globalization reached every corner of the nation.
At the same time, anthropological scholarship itself came under critical scrutiny. Community-
based long-term research is now deemed insufficient to understand these new trends. A static
view of social organization must be reconsidered in view of increasing mobility, as well as the
effects of globalization and industrialization at all levels of society, including the community and family. Static analysis of religious systems and symbolism cannot reveal the personal experiences within this increasingly industrialized and globalized setting, nor the power relations and complex processes of knowledge construction that take place in religious institutions which remain strong in the industrializing world. Ethnic groups are not to be taken for granted, but the dynamic processes that take place in the interaction between ethnic groups must be taken into account. Furthermore, social changes in the field, as well as in scholarly interests, have led scholars to take up topics such as gender, AIDS, and environmental, and civil movements as the focus of their research.

Hirai studied the workers' experience in a Japanese stationery factory near Chiang Mai. In place of a simplified division between traditional regional societies and modern industrial societies, he described the women worker's experiences and the transformations in their values and practices. He did this by analyzing women's roles and value orientations within the family and the factory, interaction within the factory, and how class consciousness is formulated based on cultural factors (1995, 1996). In the Northeast, Etoh looked at the role of women in the rural sector, and their double burden due to the expectations to be "good mothers and daughters," and as new cash income sources were made available by rural industrialization (1996).

Tanabe showed how spirit cults had been transformed, from cults concerned with rainmaking or court ritual to popular cults addressing personal desires and needs in the urban context. In the background lies a change in the northern Thai notion of personhood. People are cut off from the community of kin and locality, and the urban cult legitimizes the pursuit of personal desires (1995). More recently, he combined his analysis of urban spirit mediumship with that of HIV/AIDS self-help groups, looking at the new forms of interaction taking place in the face of suffering, and the processes of identity and subjectivity formation which they entailed (Tanabe 1999).

Personal responses to rapid changes in the urban setting were also clear in the Buddhist movements discussed by Hayashi in the rural setting and Fukushima in the urban context. Hayashi described how an urban middle-class based Buddhist meditation movement (the Thammakai) was brought to a northeastern village (1993). The newly introduced practices contrasted sharply with the local Buddhism that emphasized merit-making, and this caused conflict against the background of increasing social differentiation. Fukushima looked at the differentiation of Buddhist experience in the rapidly urbanizing setting of Bangkok, especially the Santi Asoke movement that emphasized morality and stoical acceptance of its precepts, encouraged social and political participation, and affirmed the active participation of religion in politics. The movement was received enthusiastically by members of the urban middle class and intelligentsia confronting the conservative and centralized sangha (1993). Takahashi (1994) reported on her fieldwork among mae chi (women Buddhist practitioners who follow eight precepts and reside in monasteries) in central Thailand, pointing out that, contrary to the general notion that women were economically hard-pressed or socially ostracized, the mae
chi today are extremely varied in their motivations and Buddhist practices, just as there are monks who are meditative, academic, or involved in development.

Studies of the peoples on the peripheries must also respond to increasing mobility and the accompanying dynamics of inter-ethnic relations. Through the analysis of a particular funeral and religious conflict over a corpse in a Buddhist-Muslim co-residential area, Nishii analyses the relationship between the two religious groups on various levels and the negotiation of identity that takes place near the southern border (1999). Toyota considers the effects of tourism on the Akha (1995), as well as the fluctuating identities of Akha youths in the city (1998). She discusses the dynamics of Akha migration and identity in the resulting social networks, arguing for a fluctuating process of identity in the urban setting that must be analyzed at the individual level, while keeping in mind the political and economic background. Hayami discusses how the continuity of ethnic identity is often a burden for less mobile women, a point which is ideologically formulated through ritual and a stress on their reproductive roles. She then goes on to describe the choices pertaining to ritual and reproduction available to Karen women against the background of the double pressure of community norms and national integration policy (1998). She also analyzes the discourse of Karen traditional culture and community against the wider background of environmental movements (1997).

Thus, the analysis of religion as well as ethnic identity has turned to personal experiences both on the periphery and at the center, as well the varied power relations within which such experiences and personal choices are made. The study of Thailand is thus increasingly diversified in topic, content, and approach. The interests of younger scholars today range widely, including NGOs, civil and environmental movements, religious conversion, Buddhist nuns, spirit mediumship, traditional medical practices (such as Thai massage), and urban migration. A notable trend in the 1990s is that some younger scholars have received graduate degrees in anthropology from Thai Universities.4

Laos and Cambodia

Laos and Cambodia are undoubtedly the least studied countries of this region in all disciplines, but especially in anthropology. As mentioned earlier, some village studies were carried out in the 1960s by Ayabe and Iwata in Laos. As part of the same project, Iwata wrote on the Khmer in Thailand, while in Cambodia, Chikamori (1967) provided valuable information from the field on Khmer peasants' annual migration to Cham fishing communities, and the negotiations which took place with the Cham. However, it is only in the last decade that on-site research has once more become feasible in these countries which have

4 Some of the notable M.A.theses in anthropology are: Oshima, Arato's thesis on Mon ethnicity (Thammasat University (1993)); Kato, Mariko's on mo lam phii faa (Khon Khaen University (1995)); and Nishimoto, Yoichi's on Lahu Christianity (Chiang Mai University (1996)).
been ridden with conflict for nearly thirty years. Scholars known for their work in other
countries such as Hayashi, Onozawa, and Tamura have recently carried out field surveys in
which they attempted to gain comparative insights, as well gathering basic data and
information.

For example, Hayashi, a specialist on the Lao in northeast Thailand began fieldwork in
Laos in 1990. He examined the dynamics of ethnic processes in southern Laos (1996) and
compared peoples on both sides of the border: the Isaan "Lao" of northeast Thailand, and the
lowland majority population in Laos (1998). In another study, he compared knowledge and
religious beliefs relating to the forest among the Lao of both Laos and northeast Thailand, as
well as the Mon-Khmer speaking people in southern Laos (1997). The differences between the
two nation states between which these populations are divided not only provide a striking
setting for a comparative study, but the border itself becomes a central factor in the dynamic
processes taking place on both sides (1998). Tamura (1996) has written about spirit beliefs and
rituals, kingship, indigenous peoples, and the relationship between spirit cults and
Buddhism, all topics he pursued in Burma earlier in his work. Ueda, a linguist specializing in
Lao, wrote a detailed report on the Laotian new year festival (1996), based on a two-year
sojourn in the country, showing how the festival exemplifies many of the core aspects of
Laotian religious practice, together with recent changes.

A group of scholars from Kokugakuin University conducted research in a Yao-Mien
village in central Laos (Osaki and Ishibashi 1996; Osaki and Sugiyama 1997). Based on
interviews carried out in 1994-95, they analyzed the process of migration generations ago from
southern China to the present location, as well as recent resettlement efforts by the
government and the accompanying adaptation and changes in subsistence patterns. They
point out that while the Laotian state is intensifying its efforts to integrate the former hill
dwellers through this process, the Yao have adapted flexibly to their new situation in terms of
subsistence and accompanying social relations. At the same time, they also adamantly
maintain some features of their culture such as religious ritual, and family education based
on literacy in Chinese characters.

There are some reports on agricultural practices in Laos. The studies by the Africanist,
Katsuyoshi Fukui, of swidden agriculture in Laos (1995) and Vietnam (1996) considered the
changing practices in both countries. Sonoe (1998), on the other hand, discussed paddy
cultivation technology in northern Laos.

Apart from the work on the relics of Angkor led by Ishizawa, a historian at Sophia
University, little fieldwork-based academic research on Cambodia was carried out until a few
years ago. With the opening up of the field, a number of group projects started. One such
project was led by Ohashi, and on-site field research took place in 1993 and 1994 with funding
from the Japanese Ministry of Education, providing some of the earliest post-conflict data
from Cambodia. The project included work on politics, economics, language, religion,
education, and law, and has resulted in an edited volume (Ohashi 1998). As a member of this
project, Hayashi carried out a basic survey of post-conflict Cambodian Buddhism based on
interviews with monks, lay people, and administrators in and around Phnom Penh, together with research on temple restoration, the revival of ordination ceremonies, and lay organizations. As with his studies in Thailand, his concern was primarily with Buddhism as practiced by ordinary people. He pointed out that the amazingly rapid revival of Buddhism after the establishment of peace could be understood to reflect the unfathomable inner experience of the people during the conflict years. At the same time, the state was quick to draw upon the people's religious activity, employing it as a means to reconstitute Buddhism at the state level (Hayashi 1997, 1998). Hayashi and Ishii (1996) provided an introduction to the cosmology and ritual of Cambodia, centered on Theravada Buddhism.

Onozawa also led a group of social scientists carrying out a survey of the Buddhist revival in Cambodia, in a project funded by the Toyota Foundation. Komai (1998) wrote a report based on questionnaire research during this project, noting various aspects of present day Buddhism in the village setting, such as the distribution of Buddhist practices by gender and educational level, and the relationship between social consciousness and Buddhism. He pointed out that Cambodian Buddhism coexists with ancestor worship and spirit beliefs.

Amakawa carried out an analysis based on her own research from 1995 of the role of the krom samakki which resulted in a family based farming system through land reform in the 1980s (1997). Furthermore, a new generation of students is currently in the field, pioneers in what will undoubtedly be a rich field of study.6

Vietnam

There is a solid tradition of historical research on Vietnam by Japanese scholars, which has influenced anthropological work, especially in the face of severe constraints on fieldwork. Earlier anthropological work on Vietnam was mostly based on documentary sources: Matsumoto (1993 [1969] ) wrote on the ethnological and cultural origins of the peoples of Vietnam; and there were studies from the 1940s onwards on aspects of kinship, family and inheritance. Vietnam has been an intriguing setting for social scientists ever since this early period, because of its differences from other parts of mainland Southeast Asia in terms of historical relations with the outside world, in religion, and in social organization. Part of this interest is due to the apparent similarity with Chinese social organization and the possibility of underlying differences, thus drawing the attention of East Asianists such as Suenari (1996a) and Segawa (1991). With the onset of war and conflict in Vietnam, interest in the characteristics of its social organization increased. Yet by the time Japanese anthropology came to full bloom in the mid-1970s, Vietnam had become virtually impossible to enter. The information available was limited to political and economic issues, and to journalistic

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6 Yaoi, Mariko has written a Masters Thesis based on a village study on cultural ecology in a village in Takeo (submitted to Tsukuba University, Environmental Studies, 1997).
accounts pertaining to the war.

It had still been possible to carry out some research in the 1960s. Mori, who stayed in southern Vietnam from 1965 to 1967, described the cultural changes seen in everyday life, religious beliefs and rites in a village against the background of the local ethnic movement, situating these changes in their historical context (1971). He provided valuable data on the southern parts of the country to fill the void that followed Hickey's earlier ethnography (Hickey 1964). Uno's work (1979, 1980) based primarily on documentary research provided examples of the possible strategies for anthropologists for whom access to the field is limited. He analyzed the religious movements Cao Dai and Hoa Hao from the perspective of religious history, relating them to preceding movements and cosmological beliefs in the area. Segawa, a specialist on Han Chinese societies, compared village organizations in Hong Kong and Vietnam (1991) using documentary sources, pointing out that while there were many similarities due to Chinese influence in Vietnam over a long period in history, the villagers in Vietnam had stronger organization and more direct ties, both real and symbolic, with the state.

During this period when research was limited to work on documentary sources, the historian Sakurai carried out meticulous research on the historical development of Vietnamese villages in the north since the pre-modern period (1987). Whereas preceding work had stressed the strong integration of traditional Vietnamese villages as a key to understanding the historical dynamics that led to the present, Sakurai depicts the historical development of the cong dien (communal paddy field) system since the fifteenth century, throwing light on self-management by the Vietnamese peasants. This interest in the historical dynamics of village organization was the drive behind his later field projects in the 1990s.

In the 1990s, fieldwork became possible in those areas permitted by local authorities. Information on Vietnam increased by leaps and bounds, and the research environment improved immensely. Funding and the number of projects increased, and the study of Vietnam entered a new stage. Serizawa and Takaoka reported on Chinese communities in Ho Chih Minh City (1996). They studied two Chinese organizations in the urban setting, through which they analyzed the changes in Chinese society in southern Vietnam under the influence of the socialist regime, concluding that they have lost some of their medical, social, and educational functions to the state, and have become markedly more religious, incorporating members of other ethnic groups.

Some reference to doimoi have been in most cases inevitable. Living in Hanoi, and conducting research in villages in the Red River Delta, Takaoka provided a description of kinship terminology and changes in it, pointing out that marriage and inter-generational and family relationships, as well as the integration of lineal kin groups, were undermined by doimoi (1994). Ito (1997) pointed out the adverse effects of doimoi on the minorities in the mountain areas. Yoshizawa also wrote on policies regarding minority ethnic groups in historical perspective from a decade earlier (1982). Even though field research in general in
Vietnam has become much easier, studies of the mountain areas and ethnic minorities near the borders are still extremely limited. There are works by younger scholars, written in preparation for their fieldwork, which critically assess previous writings on minorities such as the Tai in the northeast (Kashinaga 1996) and the hill minorities in the Central Highlands (Nakada 1996). For Sumimura (1998), who studied folk religion as seen by the pre-doimoi socialist regime, documentary research provided the necessary historical frame for considering the present situation.

A notable and on-going contribution is the work of the multi-disciplinary group led by Sakurai, based on intensive village studies since 1994, amassing data both from the field and from documentary sources. Suenari has pointed out from an anthropologist's perspective that even though historians have also conducted field-based studies providing valuable data, the differences between the projects of historians and anthropologists may eventually become more visible as scholarship on Vietnam matures. Both Sakurai and Suenari have taken the lead in promoting Vietnamese studies: Sakurai has begun a publication series entitled "Bakokku Tsushin (Thong Tin Bach Coc)" based on data from his projects, and Suenari is also planning a publication series on Vietnamese social and cultural studies.

Iwai, a member of the Sakurai group, analyzed changes in northern Vietnamese villages both from a historical and sociological perspective. The effects of land reform were analyzed through documentary sources (Iwai 1992), and socioeconomic changes under doimoi through both field research and documents (Iwai 1996). Here, Iwai showed how decollectivization had lightened the burden of agricultural work, even though cooperatives had not lost their role and had maintained their non-agricultural social functions. Her most recent work depicts the changes in women's productive labor against the background of changes in the relationship between agricultural cooperatives and peasant family households over the past 40 years (1999). She points out that since the 1980s, women have been released from collective work to conduct their individual income-raising activities. A member of Sakurai's Mekong Delta project, Ohno, discusses how post-doimoi migration in the Delta instigated by communal settlement policy in effect follows the same pattern as existing customary migratory practices (1998).

Many of the younger researchers have chosen a particular locale in which they carry out research by commuting back and forth from larger cities over a long period of time. These recent studies have attempted to break away from long-held notions about Vietnamese social characteristics. This recent flowering of the anthropology of Vietnam in Japan is represented in Suenari's two edited volumes (Suenari ed. 1996, 1998). The earlier volume is mostly documentary and bibliographical work except for two papers based on field data: Suenari's own paper (1996) is an analysis of the giap as an age grade system, based on fieldwork in Bach Coc. In it, he depicts the form and function of the giap, comparing it with other East Asian cases. Takaya (1996) is a study of a new religious sect in Hanoi, describing the personal history and worldview of the cult leader, and how she is accepted by her followers.

The second volume edited by Suenari is the first collection of anthropological work on
Vietnam to be based mostly on fieldwork since the country reopened for research. Nakanishi provides valuable data on Khmer villages in southern Vietnam, describing the influence of ethnic mixture on kinship organization (1998). He deals with a case in which Khmer, Han, and Kinh villagers intermix. Contrary to the widely held notion that patrilineality is less emphasized in the south of the country, the Khmer villagers have household altars similar to those of the Kinh where patrilineal kin relationships form the basis of society. Yet at the same time, ancestors of in-marrying spouses, or those of both the husband and wife, may be worshipped. Suenari (1998a) analyses patrilineal groups in a northern village in the Red River Delta. Membership of this group is restricted to the community, and the relationship between female members and their natal groups is close. While the patrilineal relationship is activated according to necessity, recognition of a network of ego-centered kinsmen is also important. In daily social life, neighborhood as well as maternal ties and quasi-kin ties are significant. Miyazawa (1998) takes up a case from a village in the Red River Delta, looking at the ranking system within the community that is tied to wider power relations. He describes the competition over the purchase of prestigious ranks (which involves the expense of throwing a generous feast) and the performance of important ceremonial offices. Elsewhere, Miyazawa presents a documentary survey in which he points out, based on earlier work on family and kinship in Vietnam, that there is a strong tendency towards equal inheritance for women, recognizing the wife's rights to her own property. Because of women's rights to inherit not only material, but also ritual, resources, ritual groups tend to manifest bilateral tendencies (1996). Hiruma (1998) describes an annual ritual, also in the Red River Delta, focusing on a sub-unit of a village, and the reformulation of various forms of organization within it. He points out that this sub-unit (xom) was revitalized after doimoi, and analyzes the process through which the present political leadership is in effect encouraging the continuity of traditional village organization.

Tamura (1998), using his observations in Hue as well as citing previous studies, carries out a symbolic analysis of non-Confucian ritual incorporating a Cham goddess from a shrine in Hue during the Confucian Nguyen dynasty. Based on the relationships between emperor/deity, and man/woman, he points out the underlying implications for ethnic relations and gender, and the differences from folk beliefs in Northern Vietnam. Itagaki (1998) gives an overview of the medical system in Vietnam, denying a simple duality between western and eastern - or traditional and modern - medicine. Rather, there is a division between north and south, and between Vietnamese and Chinese, as well as a division between public and private medical practice, incorporating religious elements in the private realm. Through a village study of herbal medicine on the outskirts of Hanoi, she points out the flexibility of the local people in adopting conflicting elements from different systems.

Okada (1998) traces the development of the concept of "ethnic group" or nation in Vietnam through a careful documentary analysis. Early in the twentieth century, it was stated that the nation was founded on common blood. Yet, at the same time a discourse about "the Southerners" continued, referring to "savage" minorities. From archeological evidence,
Yoshikai (1998) discusses the changes in bronze drums over a millennium. Whereas previous views on Vietnam tended to look at the minorities as maintaining their traditions since the Dong Son period, Yoshikai explains changes and the reorganization of cultures over a millennium, paying attention not only to the specific area, but to the wider geographical region extending from northern Vietnam to southern China. Thus, in the book, we see that these scholars are critically reexamining previous notions about Vietnamese society and culture, basing their analysis both on careful documentary work, as well as on fieldwork.

A specialist on East Asian anthropology himself, Suenari carried out fieldwork in the Red River Delta from 1992 to 1994, during which time he conducted two months research annually. He demonstrates variations in genealogy, pointing out elements that fall outside of a rigidly patrilineal model. What is of Chinese origin and what is Vietnamese are inseparable, and what is phrased in a Chinese idiom must be interpreted within the Vietnamese cultural and historical context (Suenari 1995). From 1994, he has conducted a further nine months of field research in all, and his monograph (Suenari 1998b) is based on this. Through comparison with other East Asian societies, he describes social life within the village as the background against which ancestor worship in Vietnam should be interpreted. The book is therefore first and foremost a detailed ethnography of family, kinship, and village life, depicting the social structure of a village in a conscious endeavor to provide basic information previously lacking. The volume also includes a CD-ROM containing visual data as well as the data cards collected during fieldwork.

Thus the 90s saw a flourishing of fieldwork-based research from Vietnam, and the beginnings of the collection of much needed basic data. While there has long been a tradition of historical research, current research by historians includes fieldwork together with documentary research which concentrates on local documents. Anthropologists with experience from other areas have joined in. In another joint project organized by Suenari, for example, it is interesting to see the different perspectives on present day folk religion in Vietnam of Suenari (1997), an East Asianist looking at rural folk religion on the one hand, and of Tamura (1997), a Southeast Asianist looking at urban folk religion on the other. Now a flourishing group of younger students carrying out their first fieldwork in Vietnam has begun to write, promising a further productive future.

Burma / Myanmar

Early post-independence research on Burma was primarily documentary work on history, legal codes, and Buddhist scriptures. From 1962, during the Ne Win era, the country was closed to the outside, and fieldwork became virtually impossible. This was a time when research was beginning in earnest in neighboring Thailand. In 1972, however, the first permission for a foreign group to carry out research in Burma was given to a group of scholars led by the historian Ogiwara, from Kagoshima University, to conduct a field survey
covering history, folklore, arts, languages and religion, for four months from November 1972. Ikuno took part in this trip as an ordained priest, on the basis of which he claimed to be able to approach religion from a practitioner's point of view (Ikuno 1975). Ohno, who also took part in the project, has since written extensively on a wide range of topics: Buddhism and spirit cults (Ohno 1975); a description of the Intha people on the shore of Inle Lake in Shan State (Ohno 1978); and other reports based on his experiences in Burma (Ohno 1981). Nagasawa, also a member of the project, wrote an account of the journey which includes description of the Kachin state (1975). Aside from this project, research on Burma was for the most part based on written sources until 1985. Morita analyzed the Chin feast of merit in relation to political structure (Morita 1981), and the mortuary practices of the Kachin (Morita 1995).

In 1987, the Burma Research Group of Japan surveyed the research by Japanese scholars, and compiled a volume in English by some of the most active researchers, including work on language, literature, politics, economy, history, and religion (Burma Research Group 1987). At this point, however, field-based research was still scarce, with few exceptions. They included Tamura who stayed for four months near Mandalay in Upper Burma in 1977, and for almost one year from 1979; Takatani who stayed for almost two years, in 1983-84; and, Kawanami who started fieldwork in 1986. Since 1988 when SLORC came to power, conditions for fieldwork have not improved much, but interest in Burma/Myanmar among researchers has increased. Tosa entered the field in 1990, studying urban religious phenomenon, and Kumada who represents the youngest generation of scholars in the region, has been in the field off and on since 1995.

1 Social Organization

Tamura's writings on Burmese social organization, based on his study in Upper Burma, are concerned with pointing out the principles of action where there are no explicit role systems, where groups at the levels of family, kinship and village community are difficult to characterize as autonomous or bounded, and where the "loose structure" argument might apply. He argues that what regulates people's actions, either in ritual or in secular dealings, are individual ties between intimate friends that are not necessarily founded on clear organizational principles (Tamura 1981, 1984). The principle behind such individual ties is patron-clientship based on reciprocity and the ideology of merit. He concludes that the model of a network of dyadic relationships that characterizes Southeast Asia - an argument made by Mizuno for Thailand - is also applicable to Burma.

More recently, Kumada has given an account of present-day village structure in Upper Burma. She reports changes in the local village administration after SLORC came to power in 1988, and also considers the effects, as seen at the village level, of the 1980 national sangha council which integrated the Burmese sangha into a national organization (Kumada 1998). She sees little effect of this council at the local level, as the village maintains its religious autonomy.
2 Religious Practices

Ritual and religious practice have been major themes in the study of Burma by anthropologists. In his analysis of nat (spirit) festivals, especially the famous Taunbyon nat-pwe, Tamura (1978) relates nat worship to politics, geography, and agriculture, demonstrating how it incorporates various coexisting principles. Hamada's work is also a detailed description of the same festival, characterizing it as an urban ritual where merchants, administrators and military men gather to obtain worldly gains, and where the nat kadaw (shaman) also plays an important role (Hamada 1987). Takatani (1982) compares Burmese and Thai Buddhism through a detailed study of ordination and the life of the ordained, showing the relationship between Buddhism and society in the two countries. Using field data from Mandalay, he also considers the peculiarity of the pagoda as an independent religious space for the practical religion of the people, separate from the sacred space of the temple (Takatani 1993a).

As with Thailand, the relationship between Buddhism and nat worship is discussed in much of the work of the 1980s. Earlier, Kanbayashi discussed the relationship between nat worship and Buddhism using documentary (primarily western) sources (Kanabayashi 1980, 1981). His main concern is to understand how Burmese villagers have adopted Buddhism in addition to their spirit beliefs through looking at annual rituals and shinbyu (ordination) as a rite of passage. Whereas Buddhism is oriented towards rebirth and the next life, nat worship is, in contrast, concerned with the secular realities of day-to-day living.

Tamura has dealt with the relationship between Buddhism and spirit cults in many of his works. Earlier, he analyzed rituals in a village using the binary symbolic opposition between nat worship and Buddhism (Tamura 1980). Subsequently, he questioned the place of nat worship in the Burmese Buddhist cosmology (Tamura 1987a). After introducing previous arguments relating to this issue, such as those of Spiro and Mendelson, he posits that while Buddhism is concerned with the sacred, super-mundane and absolute, nat is in the secular realm, so that the power of nat is continuous with secular power. It is never absolute and can be an object of negotiation. For the Burmese, Buddhism is "the religion" and Buddhism and nat belong to different domains. In a later article (1992), his position is somewhat modified as he considers the two as being interdependent. While Buddhism is central, both Buddhism and nat can be seen by the people as being on an equal footing. The indigenous belief system, in so far as it is not founded on doctrine, is presented as a system only through the analysis of the researcher, and it remains on the periphery of Buddhism, in a relationship with Buddhism which fluctuates.

Tosa conducted research on the weikza (religious practitioners with supernatural powers) and the activities of their cult groups (gaings) in Rangoon (Tosa 1996, 2000). Through a comparison of two gaings in Rangoon, she points out that weikza is conceptualized within the Buddhist hierarchy, and incorporates Buddhist elements in doctrine, scripture and ultimate purpose (attainment of nirvana); yet it also provides religious alternatives that are not available in Buddhism, such as a path to nirvana through ascetic training for both women.
and men (at least in theory), and answering secular needs. The activity of these *gaings* are interpreted as a phenomenon which parallel other religious revitalization movements in urban settings in neighboring countries. Takatani's analysis of *paya-pwe* looks at Buddhism in a suburban setting (Takatani 1988). This is a relatively new festival with an emphasis on procession, and he analyzes the ritual within the context of Burmese culture and urbanization.

Another noteworthy contribution to the study of Buddhist practices in Burma is Kawanami (1991), which looks at the role of women in Burmese Buddhism, based on 18 months fieldwork in Upper Burma. As well as providing valuable data on Burmese nuns and lay Buddhist women, she considers women's roles and statuses historically against the background of the Theravada Buddhist tradition, and she analyzes secular gender roles in Burmese society and the contemporary status of women on various levels. She poses the question of how to observe women's power in the religious and secular realms.

3 Religion and Politics

Since the latter 1980s, there has been a flurry of interest in political issues. This is due to changes in anthropological concerns, but also to the changing political situation after the adoption of power by SLORC in 1988. Scholars interested in religion turned their attention towards the relationship between religion (both spirit worship and Buddhism) and politics.

Tamura points out the continuities and discontinuities in Burmese politics, especially after the Ne Win era (Tamura 1987b). While he sees continuities in the nature of political relationships from the dynastic period to Ne Win, there is a clear break in terms of the relationship between religion (Buddhism) and politics after Ne Win. Buddhism before Ne Win provided legitimacy for political power in the kingdoms, and it became one of the main foundations for mass movements at the time of the civil movement for independence. Under Ne Win's policy, however, the *sangha* came under the control of the political authorities, bringing about a break in the relationship between the state and Buddhism.

Takatani also sees Ne Win's policies as a turning point in the relationship between the *sangha*, religion, and politics. Ne Win began to control the *sangha* and pagoda worship, as well as the *nat* cults, and to "purify" Buddhism (1990). After Ne Win, political authority protects and controls Buddhism, but Buddhism no longer functions as a legitimating force for the authorities. In his discussion of pagoda worship mentioned above (1993a), Takatani points out that large sums of donations are made to the *sangha*, and that here too, the state has recently been attempting to incorporate the large scale pagoda festivals under its own management.

Tamura seeks to understand Burmese kingship as a symbolic-conceptual construct. The king was legitimated in the Buddhist context as a person, deemed controller of the *nat* of the land, and, conceptualized as a divine ruler in the Hindu religious tradition. He points to possible sources of instability and the possibility of rebellion by demonstrating the internal contradictions within the concept (Tamura 1991). He also analyses the relationship between
the state (i.e., the kingdom) and nat worship (Tamura 1993) through an analysis of nat worship on two levels: the village and the state. Recently, he has developed his ideas further, combining his interest in nat/Buddhism relationships with political analysis. He points out the tendency in Theravada Buddhism to incorporate magical practices, and shows how this is manifested at the level of politics (1995). Buddhism as a religion tends to value secular activities negatively, and so cannot provide a source of power for the reconstruction of society along secular lines. As a result, forms of religious concepts and consciousness derived from magic and animism continued to exist on the periphery of Buddhism. Cult groups (gaing) traditionally centered around leaders (saya) with magical powers, and political development in dynastic Burma was closely related to these peripheral sources of power. After colonization, Buddhism became simply "the religion," cut off from the world of magic, and after Ne Win it lost its connection with secular power.

4 Ethnicity and Ethnic Groups.

On the issue of ethnicity, Takatani has been productive and provocative through his interest in the relationships between the Burmese and the Shan. While Burma has always been a multi-ethnic nation, ethnic consciousness has not always been what it is today. He considers the changes which have taken place, especially after British colonization brought an end to the kingdoms; from forms of loose political integration centered around a king, towards political systems with a defined territory and with groups vying for their own share. Ethnic groups become politically recognized units within the context of an integrated nation state (Takatani 1993b). He has described the development of Burmese and Shan images of each other, with reference to the legend of Ko Myo Shin (Takatani 1995). He has analyzed the dynamics of Shan identity in relation to this legend, taking into consideration both geographical distribution, and the processes of "Burmanization" on the one hand and "Shanization" on the other (Takatani 1998).

There are a number of reports by journalists who have managed to enter the Thai-Burmese border area from the Thai side, describing the conflict between the Burmese government and the ethnic minorities or NDF members who have fled to this region. One of them, was Yoshida, a free-lance journalist who travelled the area with ethnic rebel soldiers for more than three years. His book (1995) is not only an account of war and conflict, but also a detailed and convincing ethnographic description of the geographical, social, and cultural aspects of a multi-ethnic region that has been inaccessible to anthropologists.

There are many parallels between the subjects studied in Burma and in Thailand, even if the results are different, which is a good reason for comparative work on the two countries. Although there are still strong constraints on research in Burma, on the basis of the research so far it promises to become a fruitful field.

Across Borders
Thus we have seen how a quarter of a century of research in the area has been constrained by the prevailing conditions within each country. In the cases of doimoi in Vietnam, the legitimation of power in Burma, or development and national integration in Thailand, there are historical questions to be addressed that are specific to each country. Yet, it is also true that there are ethno-linguistic groups, religious traditions, and historical experiences that transcend such boundaries. Now that we can expect the gathering of more field-based data from the hitherto less accessible countries, it is also possible to look at the area from a wider comparative perspective.

Until the 1960s, the interest in culture complexes and cultural history often led scholars to conduct research far and wide across national boundaries and to explore the cultures of widely dispersed ethno-linguistic groups. Kaji, for example, conducted comparative documentary research long ago on the Tai peoples in Yunnan, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, to find out about pre-Buddhist religious concepts among the Tai peoples (Kaji 1980, 1990). More recently, there have been consolidated efforts at comparative work across borders by field-based researchers.

Tanabe followed the Tai into Yunnan, and looked at Tai Lue guardian spirit rites. His research reveals the contradictions and disjunction between the reality of the village and the imagined community at the level of the muang. Arguing that ritual symbols must be analyzed within their historical, political, and economic context, he demonstrates how the cults at the muang level borrow symbolism and practices from the village level, rendering the imagined community of the muang more plausible (1986). An interest in the Tai peoples, as well as Theravada Buddhism, has led scholars of Thailand to look across borders for research opportunities. Hayashi has also conducted cross-border research on the Tai-Lao peoples as well as on Buddhist practices (see below).

From 1988 to 1991, Tanabe directed a project on religious practices in Theravada Buddhist societies at the National Museum of Ethnology, which looked at religious phenomenon in relation to society in and around Mainland Southeast Asia. It aimed to look at Theravada Buddhism as everyday practice in relation to cosmological and ritual knowledge systems, and also to look at political power against the background of rapid social change in the region since the 1970s. The culminating volume of this project includes articles on Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Yunnan, some of which I have discussed elsewhere in this review. Tanabe also directed a joint Thai-Japanese project to compile a bibliography of studies of religion among the Tai peoples, a timely contribution in view of the growing literature on Thai religion based on field research by scholars in both Thailand and elsewhere including Japan.

Those working on the other side of the border have also begun to participate in these comparative projects. Hasegawa considered Theravada Buddhism and the spirit cult in relation to the traditional kingship of the Tai Lue where both the Buddhist sangha as well as the spirit ritual are organized hierarchically in correspondence with the political system (Hasegawa 1991). He also looked at the historical transformation of the relationship between
Buddhism and the spirit cult among the Tai Lu in Sipsong Panna (1993, 1995). In the modern political context of China, Buddhism has been revitalized as the core of Tai Lue identity, while the spirit ritual legitimating kingship has been suppressed.

Shintani, a linguist at the Institute of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, launched a project from 1996 to study the language and anthropology of the Shan (Tai) cultural area (Shintani 1998). This volume includes linguistic and historical work from Thailand, Laos, Burma, and Yunnan.

From 1995, a group of scholars including Baba, Hasegawa, Hayashi, Takatani, and Hayami organized a project entitled "Ethnic Relations and Regional Formation in Mainland Southeast Asia," which included work on Yunnan, southwest China, Burma, Laos and Thailand. Ethnic groups covered include the Tai peoples (Shan, Lao, Tai Lue, Dong) as well as non-Tai mino-rities such as the Mien-Yao, Lisu, Karen, and Akha. Most of the research was carried out in the 1980s and 1990s, and the results were published in a special issue of Tōnan Ajia Kenkyū (Journal of Southeast Asian Studies) in 1998. The themes are varied, but the contributions are all ethnographic accounts reflecting on the dynamics of ethnic groups, nations and regions, starting from the reality of border areas that have been peripheralized by the process of integration within nation states. Ethnic consciousness and varied regional realities develop in relation to national boundaries. Rather than taking for granted substantive "ethnic" communities and discussing the conflicts between them, the dynamic creation of forms of consciousness, reciprocal labeling, and ethnic relationships is analyzed in the context of nation states and their histories. Hasegawa (1998) examines the construction and expression of ethnic identity among the Tai Lue in Sipsong Panna through an analysis of their relations with the Han since the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Kaneshige (1998) looks at another Tai ethnic group in China, the Dong. He analyzes the creation of the Dong nationality and the process of ethnic symbol formation in China through interaction between center and periphery in Guizhou Province. He also discusses relationships between the local Dong and the ideology of nationality in the Chinese context. Hayashi (1998) describes the dynamics of inter-ethnic and inter-regional relations among the Lao in Thailand and Laos. He examines the way in which the Lao are seen by non-Lao peoples in the region, and the recent development of "Lao culture" in the context of nationally promoted tourism.

Many of the scholars in this volume study ethnic groups that reside across borders, and they are also interested in the national borders themselves, and in cross-border migration. Ayabe (1998) discusses Lisu migration into Thailand and how the subsequent consolidation of the borders has affected Lisu self-classification and identity. Murakami (1998) is also concerned with the effects of border consolidation on the Shan, who are classified both as Thai citizens and as foreign immigrants. He further analyzes how ordination as novices may provide a path through which the immigrants can find social space for themselves on the Thai side of the border. Yoshino (1998) argues that among the Mien-Yao of northern Thailand migration is itself a symbol of ethnic continuity between mythical ancestors and the Mien of...
today. This continuity is guaranteed by the documentary records of the location of ancestral tombs held in each household. Baba (1998) discusses the current promotion of Tai Lue culture and identity at the village level, now that they are firmly within the framework of the Thai nation state.

With the opening of international boundaries, younger scholars working with the people in border areas have become increasingly mobile. Kataoka (1998), whose previous research was in Thailand, analyzes Lahu Christian missionary work in Upper Burma. Through a careful documentary study of Lahu cults and conversion in missionary as well as Chinese sources, he refutes previous claims that the desire for literacy was the major drive behind Christian conversion. Inamura, who began work with the Akha in China, has also conducted research in Thailand (Inamura 1996). He has also compiled a useful and thorough bibliography on the Hani-Akka (Inamura and Yang(eds.) 2000).

The core members of the project from which the Tōnan Ajia Kenkyū special issue mentioned above originated have continued to extend their network to include scholars from the fieldwork area itself, by holding workshops in the countries where their research is located (see Hayashi(ed.) 1998 and Hayashi and Yang(eds.) 2000). Thai scholars have been interested in the Tai peoples outside of their own country for almost two decades. While there is some difference in motivation and stance between scholars from different countries, the project group aims to exchange data and provide a basis for further cooperative research across the region.

Concluding Remarks

Several points emerge from the most recent fieldwork-based anthropological research in Mainland Southeast Asia by Japanese scholars.

As in other geographical areas, anthropologists are addressing topics which they previously studied less often, such as industrialization, gender, development, and national boundaries. In relation to such newly developing interests, anthropology has come to a point where field-based research itself needs critical reconsideration. This is due partly to the changes in the discipline due to the effects of general processes such as globalization and urbanization, and the accompanying reflections on these changes by anthropologists. It is also due to the fact that in some of these countries, traditional fieldwork has been impossible for a long period. Conventional anthropological fieldwork based primarily on a stationary fieldworker in a single community has thus been challenged and reconsidered.

In some countries with limitations on fieldwork, anthropologists have relied on documentary and historical research as the only alternative. Regardless of the limitations on fieldwork, however, historical approaches are increasingly recognized as vital to anthropology. Thus, anthropologists have become more conscious of temporal span. Spatial span is also becoming a conscious issue as borders have opened up, making comparative and cross-
national research more feasible.

Accompanying these changes, there are increasing efforts to cooperate with local scholars and to extend the scholarly network. Increasingly, bilateral, and multilateral flows of information must be sought within the countries themselves, as well as with other non-Japanese scholars. With expanding flows of information from the various countries, both the level of linguistic ability and the accumulation of basic knowledge among researchers have improved. It has become all the more essential to seek a balance between intensive knowledge and data collection on the one hand, and a wider comparative theoretical perspective on the other.

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