

with the inherent symbolism of the house, regulating the behavior of its inhabitants, as well as with the role of the house within the settlement. Houses and genealogies, houses and heritage, “house societies”: the 70s and 80s of the last century saw an increase of brilliant studies of which I will mention only one, Cécile Barraud’s “Tanebar-Evav. Une société de maisons tournée vers le large” (1979) – anthropology at its best. Summing up results and spreading new ideas – thus can be appraised Roxana Waterson’s “The Living House. An Anthropology of Architecture in South-East Asia” (1990). In addition to articles and some smaller edited books there were, after Waterson’s landmark, two volumes, of several hundreds of pages each, of “Indonesian houses” (2003; 2008), published by the Leiden research group headed by R. Schoff and P. Nas and including colleagues like R. Wessing and G. Domenig.

And now, only a couple of years later, yet another book on houses in Indonesia? Is there anything new and relevant to the theme? Yes, there is, and it is essential. The author, former member of the Leiden research team, is a trained architect turned anthropologist turned historian. While doing research in Japan he put his acuteness on transitory installations, put up for only a limited time span, meant to invite gods or spirits to accept offerings or just to serve as markers for a special event. He became familiar with Japan’s early history, and when he visited Indonesia for the first time, he encountered there and became fascinated with houses still built and used, which he was familiar with from early historic house models from Japan, China, and Vietnam. It looked like an Indonesian survival of a former wider East Asian tradition in house-building. And he encountered these transitory installations in Indonesia too. They were built and ornamented with fresh, green leafage to attract spirits to accept offerings. But then there were offerings in the house, and how could one attract spirits to enter a house, a place most of the time a dark area? The answer is: to build attractive sites, to arrange spirit lures, to attract those upon whom one depends. This dependency is much more lively than the categories found in and for the house. It meant that one had to be active in luring spirits or gods, that pathways had to be built and made visible and attractive.

Part Two of the book is devoted to altars, spirit lures, and spirit ladders and includes descriptions and interpretations of all kinds of beautiful and fresh items intended to raise the awareness of spirits and direct them to the offerings. Swaying and fluttering motion as well as attractive colors and scents can serve this end. To lead the spirits their way, artificial ladders are mounted, among them are a number of inverted posts which are explained by the direction a spirit has to take to reach the offering. What would be impossible in the general construction of a house, where posts have to be arranged like trees, is an acceptable inversion, when it comes to supporting spirits find their way.

In Part Three the reader is presented with a wide range of constructive details of houses, like rafters, gable finials, projecting gables which can serve and are meant to serve as spirits’ pathways. Examples are given from many

different areas within Indonesia, the Tanimbar examples being one of the most detailed ones. Domenig manages to present a completely new view of Indonesian houses, enlivening what was in the title of Waterson’s book “The Living House.” Besides the inhabitants there are spirits entering the house, staying there for a limited time and using their ways and ladders, finials and rafters, flowers and posts.

To make spatial anthropology, a notion coined by Domenig in the 1970s, complete, Part One lays the ground for the parts of the book mentioned so far. It deals with the clearing of land, which whenever it is done, disturbs others, especially spirits and ancestors. Land-clearing means wounding an area to create fields or build houses. Those who clear the land have to compensate for their deeds, which in many cases cause the given area to become hot, which means feverish and dangerous. The cooling down of the opened hot and dangerous area runs under the notion of refrigerium, more examples of which would have been welcome. The role of sacred groves as refuge for the spirits and compensation for the destruction of other areas is dealt with as are mountains as land of the dead and of ancestors. This is a splendid book in spatial anthropology.

Wolfgang Marschall

**Fleming, Kenneth:** Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Contemporary Thailand. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014. 228 pp. ISBN 978-3-631-65410-1. (Religionswissenschaft, 19) Price: € 49.95

Despite the efforts and skills of the author, this is a disappointing book. The author is fluent in Thai, has read widely in relevant literatures, and was able to build relationships with a wide variety of individuals and groups in a seemingly short period. Yet the book’s descriptions and interpretations are analytically thin and not particularly novel. In addition, central analytical terms are only loosely defined, the case studies on which the book is based are chosen from some of the most extreme versions of Thai Buddhism and Christianity. The book also seems to show a bias against evangelicals, who comprise a majority of Thailand’s Protestants. It also potentially conveys an impression that Thailand’s Buddhists are prejudiced against Protestants despite their religion’s reputation for “tolerance.” None of these stances are valid in their pure form.

Yet there is much here from which to work. The book’s central section presents five “case studies,” ranging from the rabidly conservatively nationalist Buddhist Protection Centre of Thailand (BPCT); to the avidly proselytizing Hope of Bangkok / Hope of God indigenous Pentecostal churches; and also the Buddhist-led Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) that pursues social welfare and education efforts across religious boundaries. The fourth case study is the Institute of Religion, Culture, and Peace at Payap University, an initiative now housed at a Christian-owned university that was started by American missionaries and is currently headed by a prominent Thai Muslim scholar. The fifth case study presents a rural church that readers are led to expect is unusual in the quality of its relationships with Buddhist neighbors; however, to this

reader, the fifth case looked similar to other Protestant rural and semirural churches throughout Thailand both in its practices and in the quality and style of its relationships with Buddhists.

The five case studies are framed by an early chapter questioning whether Thai Buddhism is really more tolerant than Christianity. The author does not say where this question comes from, and his analysis is brief. He cites historical cases where Thai Buddhism (or at least the Thai Buddhist state) indeed acted oppressively toward Christians, yet he somehow retains the assumption that Thai Buddhism is indeed “more tolerant” (he recites the line again later in the book), and he also fails to discuss at length other factors (such as internal and external politics, the rise of modern cultural nationalism, and the pressures of Thailand’s engagement with “semi-colonialism,” or the internal natures of the two religions themselves) that might have contributed to these patterns.

The chapters following the five case studies suggest that a major reason for the continuing Thai resistance to Protestant Christianity is the persistence of what Fleming calls *khwammankhong* Buddhism, an interactive set of historical, political, social, and cultural discourses that might best be translated as “Buddhism as a bulwark of national security.” The existence of this style of Thai Buddhism has long been noted among overseas scholars, and the roots of this rhetorical complex (and the uses to which it has been put over the past century) have been well explored by scholars as varied as Peter A. Jackson, Patrick Jory, Michael Herzfeld, Kamala Tiyanich, Tamara Loos, Justin McDaniel, Pattana Kittiaras, Craig J. Reynolds, Somboon Suksamran, and Thongchai Winichakul. Moreover, as several of these authors show, the type of conservative nationalist Buddhist rhetoric that Fleming has called *khammankhong* Buddhism is really a kind of “official,” “socially respectable” Buddhism that represents the positions and outlooks of a particular set of social and intellectual interests within Thai society without necessarily reflecting the practices and concerns of many lay Thai Buddhists (see J. T. McDaniel, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk. Practicing Buddhism in Modern Thailand*. New York 2011, among others).

On the other side, the author criticizes Thai Protestants for failing to “adapt” to Thai culture (and especially for failing to adopt symbols and rhetorics associated with conventional Thai religious practice) in ways that might make the Protestants seem less different from the Buddhists and, therefore, more socially acceptable. This assumption that a more visible Protestant adaptation to Thai Buddhist culture might lead to greater acceptance, and possibly also to greater church growth, has been voiced in Thailand for at least 50–70 years, as Fleming himself notes. Yet this assumption has never been supported by solid social statistical research. In contrast, the statistical analyses contained in Marten Visser, “Conversion Growth of Protestant Churches in Thailand” (Zoetermeer 2008) suggest that from 1978 until about 2006 (the time of his comprehensive survey) the Protestant churches and church districts that tended to grow most *robustly* were precisely those churches (such as Baptists, Pente-

costals, and “independents”) that most explicitly *rejected* such adaptations, despite the difficulties that this “failure to adapt” might create for their converts, who were being asked to break explicitly from older traditions, beliefs, and practices.

It is exactly in this area – the strains experienced by Buddhist converts to Christianity, and vice versa – that the author’s notion of “encounter” might have proved most useful. For almost every Thai Christian is in constant “encounter” with Thai Buddhist relatives, work mates, bosses, government officials, and business partners, and this produces strains that are constantly talked and prayed about among local Thai Christians themselves. As Fleming notes, the opposite is often not the case, because, due to the small size and uneven geographical distribution of Thailand’s Christian communities, many Thai Buddhists know almost nothing about Christians and Christianity, and freely admit this. Therefore, the strain of these daily “interreligious encounters” normally falls most heavily on the Christians.

Yet, at least on a public level, the outside observer can easily find evidences of strategic cooperation between religious communities, even at the same times and places where, on other levels, Christian individuals, families, and congregations may be feeling beleaguered. Protestant Christian foundations such as World Vision, Food for the Hungry, and anti-trafficking groups often cooperate with their Buddhist counterparts in social welfare efforts. Thai Protestant Christians can now be found in public administrative posts that in earlier years might have been denied to them (Fleming himself interviewed a fairly high-ranking Christian civil servant in Uttaradit province). And the official English translation of the traditional “three pillars” formula created by King Rama IV (Vajiravudh) in the early 20th century (“nation, religion, and king,” with “religion” traditional defined as “Buddhism”) was recently changed by the Royal Thai Army to read (in English) “defending the nation, king, religions [plural], and people,” a rewording clearly meant to include Thailand’s Muslims and possibly also Christians. Fleming makes very little reference to these larger contexts, and indeed says very little about the complex ways that social, economic, and political forces and interests might be affecting the tone and style of contemporary interreligious “encounters” in Thailand and elsewhere.

Consequently, despite the work’s contributions, especially in the details of its five case studies, there is much more to be done. Truly high-quality integrative works on Thailand’s Protestants and on contemporary Christian-Buddhist relations have yet to be written, and the time may have come to begin producing them. Fleming’s book is yet another contribution to the growing body of materials on which such works might eventually be based.

Edwin Zehner

**Frembgen, Jürgen Wasim:** *Nocturnal Music in the Land of the Sufis. Unheard Pakistan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 160 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-906506-6. Price: £ 11.99