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**Review:** This book is a largely empirical study based on fieldwork carried out by its author in Thailand. It deals with a new movement in Thai Buddhism which has come into conflict with the state and with established forms of Buddhism. At the very least the work is an important contribution simply in being the first full-scale characterisation of the Asoke Buddhist movement. It gives a very plastic picture of the lives of its members, of their conceptual orientations and their ritual and economic behaviour. In this regard, there will be great satisfaction on the part of others working on Buddhism and other forms of religion in South-East Asia.

The author writes that her methodology is both historical and sociological. This is true in itself. The necessary historical perspective is provided, though it must be said that little new historical information is offered. Important questions are framed in terms of what might be called classical problems in the sociology of religion. At the same time, the closely described field work is very akin to that carried out by those who understand themselves to be "anthropologists" such as Spiro, Tambiah and Terwiel, who have dealt with related matters in the same region. At the same time, more so than the first two of the illustrious writers just mentioned, Heikkilä-Horn's approach displays a most welcome closeness and liveliness to the subject matter. A particular feature of the methodology is the use of a number of "biographies" (which are really autobiographies) of selected members of the Asoke movement, which provide considerable insight into their lives and personal development. The decision to place these at the beginning of the various chapters is imaginative, but may be controversial. There are various options for the use of such materials in anthropological reportage. These include putting them into an appendix, though they would then be less prominent and might not be read, or the production and evaluation of conflated fictional biographies, which does not seem to have been considered here. However this may be the author evidently felt a real and sympathetic interest in the daily lives and personal stories of the people involved in this particular form of Buddhism (without, it should be said, becoming a convert). Another way of locating her methodology is to say that it close to what has been proposed under the heading of "mündliche Religionsforschung" by Hans-Jürgen Greschat and carried out by him and others.

However in this case a correlation with specific, sociologically framed questions is also attempted. The work is therefore not purely phenomenological in its method. An interdisciplinary approach of this kind is very important in the study of religion, as is well illustrated here.

Three main problem areas well known in the general sociology of religion are considered here with respect to the particular case of Asoke Buddhism: (a) the question of the characteristics and nature of schismatic movements in religion, (b) the relation between religious and economic values and activity, and (c) the relation between religion, social class and social mobility. As to the first of these questions, the author concludes, on the basis of considerable discussion, that it is appropriate to regard Asoke Buddhism as a "sect". Oddly however she also twice refers to the major established forms of Buddhism in Thailand as "sects". This latter usage is, so to say, pre-sociological (being found in various general accounts of Thai history and culture) and rather unfortunate in that other terms ("order" or "denomination") would also have been available with which to refer to the established forms of Buddhism. With regard to the second question she concludes that a guarded comparison with the Protestant ethic as defined by Weber is possible. The group in question however is mixed in this respect, for it includes the "monastics" who fall under the category of "other-worldly asceticism" while the lay members perform "this-worldly asceticism". It is also significant that the fruits of their labours are invested in projects which continue to belong to the community rather than leading to individually based capitalism. As to the third question, the author is able to show on the basis of a survey that the membership of Asoke Buddhism is not mainly urban and middle class but rather, in the majority, consists of relatively disadvantaged members of society. This is a significant corrective to what has been assumed in earlier writing by others, in which the study of Asoke Buddhism has played a relatively incidental role. In each of these three complexes, but especially in the latter two, the value of empirical field research for the development or correction of theory is borne out.

In addition to the above, two major themes are pursued at various places in the work for which widely recognised theoretical bearings are still not yet available. The first of these is the relation between religion and gender. This is particularly important in Asoke Buddhism as it clearly offers women the opportunity for hitherto unheard-of self-empowerment in the context of Thai Buddhism. The originally devised rank of Sikkhamat is of great importance here. The second theme is that of the question of authenticity in Buddhism. This is important because both mainstream Buddhism in Thailand and the Asoke movement accuse each other of being inauthentic (for different reasons on each side). Of course there have been various previous studies on both of these theoretical questions, but they have not yet crystallised in a widely recognised form. This is not a great disadvantage for the author of this work, because she handles both of these matters with some delicacy with respect to the particular case. At the same time it must be said that a theoretical advance is not achieved here either, even though the empirical bearings are reliably presented.

The political interaction between Asoke Buddhism and the Thai state is clarified excellently. An important figure in this regard is the lay leader Chamlong, who stood for election on behalf of a religiously oriented opposition party. There is a clear, if implicit contrast between the Asoke leader Bodhiraksa with his lay associate Chamlong on the one hand and the well known right wing Buddhist monk Kittivuddho on the other hand. By treating these and some other figures, in

particular the prominent critical monk Buddhadasa, who was however accepted by the mainstream, the whole range of political-religious options in modern Thailand is explored. The reader is left wishing for more in this connection, in particular it would have been interesting to have a more detailed profile of Chamlong and a thorough investigation of his various activities. The author is clear that historically speaking the pressure from mainstream Buddhism and from the Ministry of Education only occurred after this political intervention. On the other hand there is a consistent assumption that the implied critique of mainstream Buddhism on the part of Asoke Buddhism, which is a function of its character as a sect, would eventually have called for repressive action in the long run quite apart from the particular stimulus of the elections.

Apart from its immediate value in its own terms, this work is part of an increasing scientific literature in which far wider questions are thrown up. For example, what is the appropriate form of civil society when it comes to questions of freedom of religion? On the one hand Asoke Buddhism has received a set-back in legal terms, in that it is not permitted to present itself as an alternative, competing form of Buddhism. On the other hand the members continue to grow in number and the challenge to orthodoxy remains. This situation raises the question of how freedom of religion, as guaranteed in the Thai constitution, will be interpreted in future. Similarly, important questions are raised about gender relationships and about the relation between all humans and the environment which would otherwise not, apart from the activities of Asoke Buddhists, have been given this prominence. These are questions for the human community at large. It is important within the specialised field of comparative studies of religion itself to carry out research into further examples of religious movements (as in this case), in order to strengthen the overall base of knowledge on which future theoretical work depends. At the same time such research forms part of a wider discourse on matters of general significance. The author may be congratulated for having contributed to this process in a most interesting manner.

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