

PAUL MICHAEL TAYLOR
Smithsonian Institution

The author calls his delightful and suggestive study of Thailand's diverse Muslim and Buddhist "curing" practices "an anthropological geography of traditional curing magic, not a medical geography" (p. 2). Indeed, Golomb's "geography" seems to take the boundaries of Thailand as the only boundaries of its study; it teaches us to question the boundaries of curing, medicine, and even ethnicity in this region. "Medical" knowledge is everywhere a great intercultural ambassador, and a hot trade item.

"Curing" and "medicine" are used here in the wide sense Southeast Asian societies frequently give these words (love-, war-, and weather-magic included). Studying them is no narrow task, given the diversity of places, and religious and ethnic groups Golomb has included (Malay Muslims in Pattani and over the border in Kelantan; Thai Buddhists and Thai-speaking Muslims in Songkhla and Ayudhya; all these and more in Bangkok). Because Thai Muslims are less familiar to most of his readers, he begins his book with a useful survey of their history and ethnography.

The book is at its best describing the varieties of "therapeutic pluralism" in this region, and speculating on why such tremendous diversity and such specializations in curative traditions should be maintained. The result illustrates the usefulness of the author's (and anthropology's) holistic approach to the subject matter. Within these richly and charmingly described multiethnic troupes of hospital staffs, exorcists, bonesetters, snake-bite specialists, folk psychotherapists, wandering monks, drug sellers, and specialists in everything from making protective charms to quieting crying infants, Golomb has found evidence contributing to several worthy issues in the history and ethnography of Southeast Asia, and in medical anthropology.

Some of the explanations Golomb explores for this diversity are the expected ones, such as ways in which adherence to local classificatory systems for identifying illnesses and prescribing therapies can become expressions of a villager's regional and ethnic identity (p. 74ff.). Many Muslim villagers reject medical care at government hospitals precisely because to accept such care would be to admit the inferiority of their traditions, as well as the authority of the Thai government in their region. Golomb also explores in detail the importance of keeping magic/medicine *esoteric*; he especially emphasizes the importance of rivalry among curers (p. 90) and the necessity for curers to orchestrate a charismatic image (pp. 256–262) in maintaining secrecy. Such observations hold true across ethnic groups, and throughout Thailand, despite some regional variations. Naturalistic (nonmagical) remedies, for example, are much more freely shared by Thai than Pattani Malay curer-magicians. Yet curers of every ethnic group are forbidden to share knowledge of recipes received by revelation in a dream—except perhaps to their one successor. Golomb also explores similarities in Muslim and Buddhist interactions with animistic elements of folk religion. He argues that animistic cures serve *both* Islam and Buddhism, by providing relief for this-worldly ailments,

leaving the Great Religions to deal with other-worldly issues. Yet both religions have produced "sacred" as well as "magical" cures; there are saint-like Moslem religious leaders whose direct contact with Allah provides cures, in the way certain venerated Buddhist monks produce miracles through the sacred power derived from scripture readings and meditation.

Golomb reviews many other aspects of Thailand's complex therapeutic pluralism. He emphasizes similarities among ethnic groups in the roles of "in-group" as opposed to "out-group" curer-magicians. For Malay and Thai, Muslim and Buddhist, "out-group" curers are preferred for treatments (such as love-magic) requiring confidentiality. All villagers need some out-group magic in their ritual armamentarium, in order to battle the out-group spirits and sorcery to which so much local suffering is imputed.

Golomb even speculates on the role of medical knowledge in the diffusion of Indic systems of thought in Southeast Asia. For example, the widely used incomplete or corrupt magical formulae in Sanskrit or Pali are considered evidence that lower-caste Indian peddlers (rather than Brahmins) may have spread these bastardized formulae along with other Indic institutions.

Golomb widely reviews relevant literature in his extensive notes. His methods are often anecdotal; while richly suggestive, they leave us without a comprehensive description of any particular curing specialist's (or particular ethnic group's) therapeutic system. For example, there is no systematic discussion of any particular folk classification of maladies, their causes, and their methods of treatment. Despite the author's wide travels and interviews, there is no use of statistics to estimate the prevalence of any particular viewpoint among these folk nosologies. Yet the book leaves us with a rich understanding of *why* such diverse therapeutic systems have been maintained throughout the region's history, and of the similarities and differences across ethnic boundaries in roles of practitioners, in responses to animism as well as modern medicine, and in the complementary functions of "in-group" and "out-group" medicine.

***Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China.* JAMES L. WATSON and EVELYN S. RAWSKI, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. xv + 334 pp., notes, glossary, index. \$40.00 (cloth).**

NORMA DIAMOND
University of Michigan

The essays in this volume examine Chinese views and practices relating to death, burial, and post-burial, from the tombs of the Ming and Ch'ing emperors to the marbled Memorial Hall for the late Chairman Mao. The contributing historians, sociologists, and anthropologists use data ranging through classical writings, popular manuals, local histories, traveler accounts, and firsthand field data from Taiwan and Hong Kong village studies, refugee interviews, and the Chinese press. The materials thus take into account variations across time, space, and

social class. Yet the core issue addressed by these papers is: what held Chinese culture together? Most of the authors argue for an underlying unified structure in death rituals and beliefs, despite variations relating to social class, age, gender, and ethnicity.

The proper performance of rites was an element of central concern to the literati and respectable commoners alike. Watson's introductory article lines out the general agreement that had solidified by late Ming regarding the necessary core of funeral practices. Based on classical models, and balancing popular practice and literati ideal, these included the public notification of death, the donning of mourning garb by kin, ritualized bathing of the corpse, provision of foods, goods, and money to the deceased, the preparation of a soul tablet for the domestic altar, music to accompany the corpse and settle the spirit, the sealing of the corpse into an airtight coffin, and the "expulsion" of the corpse from the community. The elaborateness of these procedures and subsequent rituals depended on social class. Minimally, a funeral required a priest, a piper, and two corpse handlers. Many ordinary families overreached and went heavily into debt. Several of the essays deal in whole or in part with the specialists who could assure that proper procedures were followed, as in Evelyn Rawski's introductory essay, Susan Naquin's historical account of funerals in North China, and James Watson's piece on funeral specialists in contemporary Cantonese society. Stuart Thompson, drawing on his Taiwan fieldwork, deals with the question of "common knowledge" about proper practice, focusing on the meaning of food presentations at various points in the funeral sequence.

Both Rawski and Naquin discuss the role of the State in setting the norms and correcting popular custom. From Sung times on, the development of printing facilitated the spread of inexpensive texts for religious specialists and the semi-educated. Naquin's survey of North China gazetteer accounts from late Ch'ing to the early 1940s also discusses some of the continuing deviations: the management of deaths of monks and nuns, of individuals without families, and of those who died in widespread disasters, as well as the death rituals outside of the Confucian order (for Muslims, Mongols, White Lotus sectarians). Myron Cohen looks at "counterculture" alternatives to the Confucian view of the soul after death, particularly the idea of salvation taught through Buddhism and various "heterodox" sects and why, despite their appeal to segments of the population at various times, they failed to overcome popular beliefs focused on gods, ghosts, and ancestors, and an afterlife of punishments and rebirth.

Two of the papers deal directly with gender issues. Elizabeth Johnson's article analyzes the funeral laments of Hakka women in the Hong Kong New Territories. These songs, often improvised, focus on the life of the deceased but also provide an opportunity for the singer to express her own resentments toward the dead and the living. At funerals, otherwise silent women could voice their grievances. Emily Martin's article is a brilliant examination of women's views of the meanings of death, birth, and marriage, and the ways in which women

used contradictions within the dominant ideology against the system and for themselves.

Rubie Watson uses her essay to show the linkage between the graveside ancestral cult and local political competition. Drawing on field data from the New Territories, she looks at the debates and potential violence at graveside rites as lineage segments contend for power and prestige.

The last three essays in the volume also connect to politics. Rawski provides a fascinating and detailed account of the prescribed rituals for the Ming and Ch'ing emperors—a giant-scale elaboration of the basic structure, and surrounded by another version of the political jockeying that appears in Rubie Watson's essay. Frederic Wakeman draws parallels between the entombments of China's more recent "modern" leaders—Sun Yat-sen and Mao, who lie in embalmed splendor in mausolea that are museums and shrines for the faithful, while Chiang Kai-shek awaits his successful return to the Mainland in more temporary quarters. The volume concludes with Martin Whyte's essay on the understandable failure of the government of the Peoples Republic to popularize cremation and mass burial. While the new system has met with some "success" in urban areas due to the absence of any other alternatives, it has not caught on among the rural population. Zhou Enlai requested that his ashes be scattered, but even the Party faithful seek ways of conforming at least in part to the traditional practices surrounding the death of a family member.

To single out any one essay in this collection is difficult. All of them are of interest, and all of them reflect superb scholarship. Taken as a whole, this is an important book in the field of China studies and a work that should be of interest to anthropologists whatever their area interest may be.

***The Structure of Chinese Rural Society: Lineage and Village in the Eastern New Territories, Hong Kong.* DAVID FAURE. Hong Kong, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. xvix + 273 pp., maps, figures, tables, plates, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. \$32.00 (cloth).**

RUBIE S. WATSON
University of Pittsburgh

This is a richly detailed, local history of the eastern New Territories in Hong Kong. It is not a community study but is concerned with the political history of an entire region, concentrating on the period from the 15th century to the Japanese occupation in 1941. The author, along with other Hong Kong based scholars, is responsible for the Oral History Project at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Over the last decade Faure and his colleagues have collected documentary records relating to the history of the New Territories. In the present book Faure makes extensive use of these materials, which, it should be noted, have only recently become available for scholarly use. Observational data and interviews with New Territories residents complement the more conventional documentary evidence. Although the author was trained as a sociologist, the skills he brings to bear in this volume