family expelled from the Agency. The market complex, his base of operations, was demolished. The “successful” completion of the operation, however, caused some thoughtful Mahsuds to comment that the wound caused by this display of force and vindictiveness “would never heal.” (p. 79)

The closing pages of this volume are addressed to Islamic district paradigms in which the author seeks to apply his understanding of tribal Wazir society to the larger Muslim world. Dr. Ahmed notes the absence of a formal “priesthood” in orthodox (sunnī) Islam. He also comments how district, province and state administrative boundaries effectively neutralize the unity of the Muslim community (umma). Muslims, he notes, are “the same everywhere, and yet their societies are different everywhere.” (p. 150). Dr. Ahmed ends his study with a series of questions and suggests the need for more intensive enquiry into the phenomenon of mullah-types as revolutionary leaders. Despite the current incarceration of the South Waziristan Mullah (he chose not to flee the country), Dr. Ahmed asks if we are “witnessing a shift in style and loci of leadership away from urban, Westernized bureaucratic elites?” Are movements like those in Waziristan another dimension of “current ... religious revivalism surging in many Muslim countries?” (p. 152). Clearly, he does not believe the Mullah, or the phenomenon that he represents, has passed from the scene.

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In recent years, there has been increased interest in Southeast Asia by scholars living and teaching in Australia. Professor Terwiel’s A History of Modern Thailand 1767-1942 is an example of this phenomenon. This book is part of a series on the histories of Southeast Asia edited by Chr. L. M. Penders. Forthcoming are eight other volumes covering areas from Prehistory to the History of Islam. According to Penders, the series is to help rectify 200 years of ignorance and neglect by White Australia of its Asian neighbors to the north.

Professor Terwiel’s book covers Thai history from 1767-1942, or roughly from the fall of Ayutthaya to the beginning of Siam’s involvement in World War II. There are ten chapters in all. The first chapter attempts to outline in broad strokes the socioeconomic and political structures of Thai society of the late Ayutthaya period. It specifically addresses the saktina system emphasizing rank and hierarchy in Thai social organization. With the description of Thai society in the late Ayutthaya as a “backdrop,” Terwiel proceeded to study the rapid rise and fall of King Taksin from 1767-1782.

The next seven chapters are devoted to six reigns in the Chakri dynasty. Terwiel characterizes each reign summarily as “Innovation in the Guise of Orthodoxy” in the First reign, “Peace and Trade” in the Second reign, “Westernization from Above” in the Fourth reign, “The Regent and New Siam” and “Humiliation and the Path to Autocracy” in the Fifth reign, and “The King, Nationalism, and the Alienation of the Bureaucracy” in the Sixth reign. The final chapter deals with the period from 1925 to
1942, corresponding to the succession of King Prachatipok, the “democratic” Revolution of 1932, and the rise of a new civilian/military elite.

The mission of the series and the stated goals of Professor Terwiel’s contribution are timely and laudable. To condense nearly two hundred years of a nation’s history into three hundred odd pages, however, is an impossible task. What the book does provide the reader is a good and entertaining story of kings, princes and nobles. While the author promised to be controversial and provocative, most of the points he raised are not entirely new to Thai specialists.

One had hoped that as a non-historian, Professor Terwiel would bring a novel and perhaps refreshing approach to the study of Thai history. It seems however, that his reliance on traditional sources have limited his conceptual framework. While opening his study with an interesting chapter on the saktina system, he does not maintain that as a common thread throughout the book, instead, he embraces the approach of traditional Thai historians/chroniclers. In deploring what he diagnosed as the hagiographical tilt in Thai historiography, Professor Terwiel substitutes it with his own personality/idiosyncratic interpretation of historical events.

On the issue of periodization and organization of the book, I am perplexed by Professor Terwiel’s definition of modernity. To many, modern Thai history begins in 1932. Several would argue that Chulalongkorn’s reign marked the beginning of Siam’s entry into the modern era. I suppose modernity in this book is defined in dynastic terms, i.e., the Chakri dynasty and the Ratanakosin era. Unfortunately, there were few significant changes in the Thonburi and early Ratanakosin periods that would qualify Siam then to be called modern. Furthermore, I find it rather unsettling that the most “modern” chronological period covered, from 1927 to 1942, which included many significant events, was only dealt with in one short chapter. Ending modern Thai history with Siam entering World War II is rather abrupt and arbitrary.

How does this book fit into the overall scholarship on Thai history today? My sense is that Professor Terwiel’s work is very much similar to Prince Chula Chakrabongse’s Lord of Life: the Paternal Monarchy of Bangkok, 1782-1932, (New York: 1960). Of course, Terwiel’s interpretation of Thai history is “idiosyncratic” while Prince Chula Chakrabongse’s was hagiographic. It is also significant to note that the book fails to underscore the direction and finding of ground-breaking research done by present day Thai scholars. The interest in dynasty history is declining. Taking its place is a reading of history from the conceptual point of elite/mass relationships. Hagiographical interpretation of history is now passé. In fact, during the recent Bicentennial Celebration of the Ratanakosin Era, a monograph entitled “200 Years of Ratanakosin: the Bloody Dynasty” was clandestinely published and circulated. Shunning the beatifying festivities, the author (or authors) launched a scathing attack upon the nine monarchs of the Chakri dynasty.

On a more serious note, most young scholars in Southeast Asia today have rejected the elitist view of history. Many have been attracted to Marxist and political economic analysis. Others have turned to study folklore and history, provincial history, regional and minority political cultures and values in an attempt to understand the weltanschauung of the people and how all these factors contributed to the shaping of “national” histories.

In sum, while I applaud Professor Terwiel’s efforts in writing a highly readable text on Thai history using a wide variety of sources in several languages, I nevertheless feel that he fails to capture the vibrancy of present day historical research. Although this book sheds light upon some aspects of Thailand’s past, it does not suggest how that