Out of a total of thirty-nine essays, all but five have been previously published elsewhere. Most of them are quite recent, only three out of thirty-nine having appeared before 1962. With such up-to-date material, it is indeed amazing that one could read these 600-odd pages without ever being aware that there have been wars going on for several years in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Quite possibly, Tilman was deterred from including discussions of the issues involved because most pertinent writings are biased one way or another. But, by doing so, he has simply avoided all relevant contemporary issues in the area. Rather than making this volume attractive to a wider audience by keeping it free from controversial subjects, he has only succeeded in making it sterile and in presenting an extremely distorted picture of the contemporary socio-political situation in Indochina and in the neighboring nations.

A very important lacune in this compilation is the total neglect of highland minorities which form an aggregate of as much as half the population in some countries. It seems inconceivable that a collection of essays purporting to deal with contemporary socio-political issues in Southeast Asia should so neglect completely the numerous aspects of ethnic relations and the relationships between indigenous minorities and national government. For this reason alone, this collection is inappropriate for anyone wishing a balanced introduction to the area. It may be added that, despite a good balance between mainland and insular Southeast Asia, the geographical coverage is very uneven. There is, for instance, only one paper dealing specifically with the Philippines and none at all about South Vietnam.

Finally, we must add a note about the deceptively extensive bibliography which fills nineteen pages. Even taking into account its very strong bias in favor of publications in English, it is absolutely ludicrous to offer a two-page bibliography of Indochina in which only two French works are mentioned while such clearly deficient and quite outdated compilations such as the American University Area Handbooks and the Human Relations Area Files Handbooks are recommended. This bibliography is definitely slanted towards publications written from a reactionary point of view, some of them totally unreliable. Tilman also ignores virtually every relevant book written by an anthropologist, including the works of Burlings, Hanks, Hickey, Izikowitz, Lehman, Moerman, Spiro – to mention only a few scholars who have written works of wide interest in English. Among non-anthropologists, the bibliography makes no mention of numerous important works, such as those of Evers, Silcock or Buchanan (whose introductory book on Southeast Asia contains maps that are vastly more instructive than those in the volume under review), nor is there any guide to documentary sources, local newspapers or periodicals.

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Intensive anthropological study of the Akha (or Ekaw) of Burma, Laos and
China (Yunnan) has been impossible in recent years. And although at least four intensive studies of the Akha of northern Thailand have been made in the past five years, researchers must still rely on the published works of Hugo Bernatzik and Karl Izikowitz based on field work carried out in the 1930’s. Thus, the information contained in George Murdock’s Ethnographic Atlas, for instance, is based on pre-war field research. The present work by Paul Lewis, therefore, is especially welcome.

Lewis is a missionary with anthropological and linguistic training, fluent in Akha. He was in contact with Akha in the Kengtung area of Burma from 1951 to 1966. These ethnographic notes were written shortly after he left Burma in 1966. Since then, he has gone to Thailand to continue missionary and development programs with various highland minorities. He has already published an Akha-English dictionary and several short papers on Akha culture and language.

These volumes are descriptive in approach and they reflect the writer’s interests. Lewis is at his best when describing religious and curing ceremonies, religious specialists, beliefs, life cycle customs, language and such related topics as proverbs, names and kinship. Less comprehensive coverage is given to agriculture, hunting, husbandry, food, housing, settlements, property, justice, sexual behavior, family and other aspects of social and economic organization. The principal limitation of the data is that they were acquired through interviews with informants from several different villages. Lewis is conscientious about identifying the source of most statements, recognizing that there are important cultural differences between villages and between individuals. However, as he never spent any substantial period of time in an Akha village, there are few data based upon direct observation and there are no statistical data at all. In addition, an index would have been most useful.

In his generally very full treatment of religion, Lewis does not attempt to account for the fact that almost all Akha shamans are female, whereas in closely-related neighboring groups such as the Lisu shamans are usually male. In fact, this phenomenon of emphasizing one or the other sex in communicating with the spirit world is very general throughout Southeast Asia. The explanations which have been put forth until now (higher status of men, more emotional tendency of women, relationship to menopause, etc.) have done nothing to clarify the subject which seems important for the assessment of the relative roles of the sexes.

Lewis provides new material on the messianic movement in the Ssu-mao area of Yunnan during the Second World War and he also cites individual instances of Akha who have adopted Buddhism or Christianity or who have forsaken all religion.

Lewis mentions a “head of the sub-clan” who must be consulted before inter-clan marriages take place and who must be given first fruits. The sub-clan is further defined as spanning seven generations. Such precise notions were not found in the Akha villages with which I am familiar in northern Thailand where both sub-clan and clan elder are rather vaguely defined.

With material of this kind available, there is now no excuse for gross ethnographic inaccuracies to be perpetuated in the literature as, for instance, that Akha females are deflowered by elder males appointed by the village (and similarly youths are initiated by appointed widows!) (Srisawat 1963, Young