

for measuring attitudes, developed mainly for use in North America and Western Europe as they are, to be inadequate for her particular study. Instead, the author evolved her own instruments to do justice to the specific Thai setting, which is characterized by a personalized conception of authority and a distaste for open discussion of controversial issues – features that seem to be in conflict with democratic requirements. ‘Progressiveness’ and ‘traditional orientation’ are defined by Liebig-Hundius as opposite poles of a continuum, and her operationalization of these concepts centres around the approach towards authority and self-responsibility, and the assessment of controversial discussion and criticism.

The study demonstrates the tensions and incompatibilities between ‘new, democratic’ attitudes on the one hand, and indigenous values and behavioural patterns on the other. Although the students claimed to be in favour of ‘democracy’, the data show that ‘democratic’ attitudes are not adopted as an integrated system, but selectively. Adoption or rejection seems to depend on the perceived relationship between different aspects of ‘progressiveness’ and traditional value orientations which tend to prevent social confrontation. The greater ‘reform orientation’ of university students as compared with students from teacher training colleges suggests that ‘democratic’ attitudes can be influenced by educational experiences.

Despite the illustration of the research results with an impressive amount of data and analyses, I doubt the value of purely statistical research methods for gaining an insight into the formation or modification of attitudes. At the same time, the delayed publication of the results leads me to question to some extent the validity and relevance of this case-study as a helpful guide for educational policy.

---

S.J. Tambiah, *Culture, Thought and Social Action; An Anthropological Perspective*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 1985, 411 pp.

HENK SCHULTE NORDHOLT

This book, a collection of essays written between 1968 and 1983, is divided into two parts. Part One consists of four essays on ritual, and Part Two contains five essays on cosmologies and classifications. Although the author did most of his fieldwork in Thailand, the book covers a much wider area. Apart from copious ethnographical data from the Thai culture area, case studies from, and comparisons with, Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia (plus Malinowski’s Tobriand data) are presented.

What makes this an important book, moreover, is the fact that the author develops a theoretical framework which is relevant for both anthropologists and historians in general. The questions raised in these essays are complex, and any reader who hopes to find simple answers will be disappointed.

It is not easy to assign Professor Tambiah a place in any of the mainstreams of anthropology. Although influenced during his early academic

career by L. Dumont and British social anthropology, Tambiah also became aware of the importance of history, and a historical dimension is seldom absent in his writings. He cannot be classified as a structuralist, either, nor as a materialist or an idealist. He successfully combined insights from various different schools and traditions in order to develop his own analytical approach.

Tambiah shows that, after several decades in which anthropology has tended to become fragmented by the rise of a rapidly growing number of sub-disciplines, each dominated by its own specialists, it is still possible to take a more or less holistic view. There are, according to Tambiah, no exclusive fields of anthropological research which can easily be separated from a wider context. Nor are there any dominant categories, such as symbolic classifications or economic structures, which ultimately determine culture. He rejects simple dichotomies, between, for instance, religion and politics, and avoids the inherent danger of reifying analytical categories into 'real things'. Instead, the author explores the possibilities of analysing cosmologies and rituals as totalities. In this respect, the interaction between symbolic systems and social structure, the ritual order and its socio-political context, in short, between thought and action, is a key concern throughout the book.

Like cosmological classifications, rituals not only are blueprints for life, but also are enacted in human practice. For, 'cultures and social systems are, after all, not only thought but also lived' (p. 211). Therefore both semantic and pragmatic features need to be analysed in order to be able to appreciate rituals and cosmologies as totalities. It is the dialectical relationship between thought and action which finally reveals the – sometimes conflicting and often puzzling – meanings and the dynamic structure of these totalities.

Some of the essays have already become 'classics' in anthropology, while others certainly deserve this distinguished status. No one who is seriously interested in ritual can ignore Tambiah's concept of 'a performative approach to ritual' which is elaborated in Part One, and especially in chapter 4. Starting with a critical evaluation of earlier anthropological writings on ritual, and especially magic, the author rejects the idea that magic should be analysed in terms of causality and direct effect. Seen from this point of view, magic often fails when it does not 'produce' health, rain or similar 'results'. Instead, Tambiah presents the idea that ritual is not, in the first place, intended to intervene in the course of nature, but to mark a social transition. As an enactment of thoughts, or cultural conceptions, ritual has a performative character because it transmits ideas and conceptions and converts them into social practice. Thought and action cannot be separated.

The dialectical relationship between cosmologies and social structure is analysed in a similar vein. This is most clearly elaborated in chapter 7, 'The Galactic Polity Southeast Asia'. Tambiah here illustrates how a political system can be analysed as a totality. For historians in particular, this 'model' offers ample opportunities for investigating the nature of pre-colonial polities in South and Southeast Asia. The Galactic Polity is a multi-dimensional 'model', for it connects a cosmological model of the

universe with geographical, political, administrative and economic structures in which the same *mandala* pattern is to be perceived. This is a pattern in which a centre is surrounded by satellites which tend to duplicate the centre. The *mandala* was not derived from any ancient cosmological ontology. Instead, it was reflected in social practice, in which a centre had to cope with unwilling satellites, and the fragmentation of agricultural surpluses and labour supplies. Therefore, the ideal of unity and fragmentation, divine order and violent rebellion, constituted different sides of the same coin and provided the system with its internal dynamics.

The use of the Galactic Polity 'model' is not necessarily restricted to Buddhist Thailand, for Tambiah shows how the same pattern is to be found in Java and Bali as well. Both concepts of a performative approach to ritual and the Galactic Polity recur in chapter 9, where Tambiah attacks Clifford Geertz's notion of the Theatre State in Bali. Geertz focused his attention almost exclusively on the interaction of the symbolic meaning of state rituals, and left matters of political power and conflict more or less aside. Tambiah demonstrates, however, that ritual and violence, order and disorder, and cosmological conceptions and social practice can be combined into a dynamic totality. This way, he convincingly connects what was left unconnected by Geertz.

Although the concept of the Galactic Polity may prove of great value for further anthropological and historical research on, for instance, Javanese kingdoms, it remains to be seen whether, or to what extent, it is also applicable to Indonesia under colonial and post-colonial rule. In that respect, Thai history differs fundamentally from that of other parts of Southeast Asia.

---

Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, *From British to Bumiputra rule: Local politics and rural development in Peninsular Malaysia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986. 282 pp. S \$ 47.50 (Us \$ 21.70).

NICO G. SCHULTE NORDHOLT

The analytical approach taken by Shamsul in this study is fascinating as well as unique. Using a socio-historical approach, the author offers impressive insights into the complexity of the process by which (inter)national policies, when implemented at local levels, are often deformed beyond recognition as a result of inherent tensions and contradictions in the politico-economic structure of Malayan society. In this respect, Shamsul is one of the very few anthropologists who systematically place their fieldwork within a broad context in which the interrelationships between local, regional and (inter)national policy interests are evenly treated.

Shamsul's study is unique to the social scientific literature on Malaya because the author's two years of fieldwork were carried out in a community in the state of Selangor where rubber and palm oil are the main