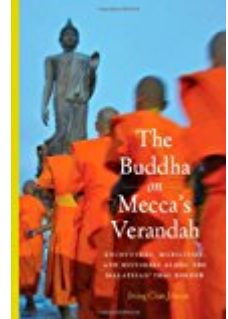


Irving Chan Johnson. *The Buddha on Mecca's Verandah: Encounters, Mobilities, and Histories along the Malaysian-Thai Border.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012. 240 pp. \$30.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-295-99204-4.



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Published on H-Buddhism (January, 2017)

Commissioned by Thomas Borchert (University of Vermont)

While all three major sectarian traditions of Buddhism (Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana) are found within contemporary Malaysia, this South-east Asian nation does not figure large in the academic study of Buddhism. Modern Malaysia is a Muslim-majority nation dominated by its ethnic Malay-majority population. While Buddhist kingdoms flourished on the Malay peninsula in the premodern past, the rise of Buddhists as a demographically significant religious minority (19 percent) in contemporary Malaysia is a reflection of colonial-era developments. Buddhism is the second-largest religion in Malaysia after Islam, yet Malaysian Buddhists are distributed across a variety of minority ethnic groups. Some of these ethnic minorities, such as the Thai, have long lived in geographic regions now encompassed by the modern Malaysian state. However, most of these ethnic minorities (such as Chinese, Indians, Sri Lankans, and Burmese) migrated to colonial Malaya in response to British imperial policies. As a national Buddhist tradition which is a demographic minority, practiced almost exclusively by

ethnic minorities, and a historically recent consequence of migration, Malaysian Buddhism has tended to attract less scholarly attention than other national traditions in Asia. But this has begun to change as scholars of Buddhism are increasingly interested in studying Buddhism among minorities, migrants, and diasporas.

Most of the scholarly research on Malaysian Buddhism has focused on Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism within the Chinese ethnic community.[1] This is not surprising since Chinese Malaysians constitute the vast majority of Buddhists (95 percent) within the country. More recently, some scholars of Buddhism have turned to exploring non-Chinese Buddhist communities within Malaysia, particularly those traditions that emerged out of transnational linkages forged during the British colonial era.[2] Few if any scholars of Buddhism have carried out research among those ethnic Thai communities in the northern Malaysian states which are adjacent to Thailand's southern border. Ethnic Thai communities are a small demographic minority within Malaysia's

northern states. They also constitute a very small percentage of the total number of Buddhists in contemporary Malaysia. Thus, small in size, divided among scattered villages, and distributed widely across an expansive rural terrain, ethnic Thai Buddhist communities in northern Malaysia lack that demographic size, social density, and institutional prominence which is more likely to attract the attention of conventional scholars of Buddhism. Not surprisingly therefore, most studies of Malaysia's ethnic Thais have been carried out by anthropologists engaged in rural village studies. These anthropologists primarily have investigated a range of disciplinary specific topics, such as kinship, village social organization, the rural economy, and ethnic minorities.[3] While Buddhism is inevitably addressed within these studies because religion is an important marker of social identity and distinction for ethnic Thai Malaysians, it is rarely the central analytic focus of any given study. And even when it is a primary substantive topic of study, the analytic frames employed and the research questions investigated inevitably reflect anthropological debates and questions rather than those of religious studies or Buddhist studies. [4]

Irving Chan Johnson's *The Buddha on Mecca's Verandah: Encounters, Mobilities, and Histories along the Malaysian-Thai Border* fits squarely within this tradition of anthropological scholarship on ethnic Thai Buddhist Malays. Johnson carried out ethnographic research in the pseudonymous village of Ban Bor On in 2001 and 2002, although follow-up visits update his analysis well beyond this initial period of research. Ban Bor On is a small village of 128 households in the northern Malay state of Kelantan. The village is located only fifteen minutes from the Thai-Malaysian border and its inhabitants are almost entirely ethnic Thai and Buddhist. Its families have extensive kin and friends across the border in Thailand's neighboring Narathiwat province, and its trading activities and networks also stretch across the border as well. Ban Bor On is one of Kelantan's largest

ethnic Thai villages, and it has prospered as its economy has shifted from rice cultivation to the growing of tobacco and garden vegetables for trade. Increasingly affluent, securely embedded in Kelantan's broader political and social landscape, and fiercely patriotic, Ban Bor On's Buddhist households nonetheless live in a world of expanding social, cultural, and economic horizons.

As the subtitle of the book indicates, Johnson is primarily interested in updating the classical anthropological village study in an age when rural communal life is increasingly entangled with social forces emanating from the national, transnational, and even global stage. Exploring the vicissitudes of identity in a turbulent, multi-cultural national border zone, Johnson analyzes the ambiguities of identification at play as the occupants of Ban Bor On encounter and transverse a multitude of both literal and symbolic national, ethnic, religious, and cultural boundaries. Buddhism comes in and out of focus during his discussion of these encounters and negotiations. Nonetheless, Johnson's monograph and its interpretation of the social significance and use of Buddhism in the daily life of Ban Bor On offer many insights for scholars curious about the contemporary social dynamics of Buddhism in minority communities, border regions, and diasporic landscapes, especially those adjacent to Buddhist majority nations.

The Buddha on Mecca's Verandah is primarily about the complex politics of social and collective identifications within both a Southeast Asian border zone and a nation-state that is structured by a highly regimented and hierarchical bureaucratic ethnic politics. Johnson explores and explicates the reimagining of collective identity by a minority population which experiences marginality within the modern Malaysian nation-state across multiple reinforcing registers--ethnicity, religion, territorial location, and demographic visibility. Reflecting a common anthropological predisposition, Johnson is particularly interested in the

making and remaking of collective identity in those hidden, intimate, and backstage settings of social life often overlooked by other scholars. Informed by a long-established anthropological fascination with the production and manipulation of boundaries in the creation of collective identity, he is particularly attentive to the flows of people, objects, symbols, and representations across boundaries and through interstitial border zones. Grounded in scholarly approaches that highlight how people creatively negotiate their collective identities, he examines how the inhabitants of Ban Bor On critically respond to and rework the rigid, essentialized identities offered up by nation-states as well as other bureaucratic institutions. And attuned to contemporary anthropological approaches that prioritize fluidity, rupture, and ambiguity, Johnson is particularly interested in documenting and explicating those daily encounters and experiences that highlight uncertainty, contradiction, connectivity, and displacement. Throughout *The Buddha on Mecca's Verandah*, Johnson returns to the dynamics of mobility in and across multiple registers as he seeks to understand how ethnic Thai Buddhist villagers as Malaysian citizens constantly renegotiate their identity and commitments within a rapidly expanding and unbounded series of entangled social worlds and cultural horizons. Central to this identity work, according to Johnson, is the need of Ban Bor On's residents to solve—even if only contextually and provisionally—the "puzzle of Thainess" (p. xvi) and the contradictory claims of belonging it places upon them as ethnic and religious minorities living within a multicultural borderland of jumbled social relations, histories, and memories.

After a brief preface which lays out the primary scholarly frames and questions structuring the monograph's argument, in the introduction, "The Kelantanese World," Johnson establishes the general historical, social, and cultural settings within which the experiences of Ban Bor On's Buddhist inhabitants take shape. Kelantan is itself

a marginal place within Malaysia. A territorially peripheral state imagined by other Malays as an Islamic backwater ruled by conservative Islamists, it was nevertheless in the past a powerful center of Southeast Asian Islamic learning. The introduction succinctly describes the complicated nineteenth- and twentieth-century political and legal history through which the legal border between Thailand and Malaysia was established. As a result of this process, local communities—Malay and Thai, Muslim, and Buddhist—were reconstituted into new configurations of divided yet inter-linked economic trade, political governance, and cultural exchange. The introduction explains the social and demographic place of ethnic Thais within Kelantan, the economic and geographic place of Ban Bor On within Kelantan state, and Ban Bor On's various enduring relations with Narathiwat province across the border in Thailand. Finally, Johnson also critically reviews Thai Kelantanese identity in the context of academic scholarship on the Malaysian dynamics of ethnicity, plural societies, and national identity in the colonial and postcolonial eras. Against overly romantic narratives of continuity, religious otherness, and adaptation, Johnson argues for a strategic and reflexive understanding of identification in which Kelantanese Thais are able to "delicately maneuver between both Malaysian political identification and Thailand's cultural assimilation" (p. 23) in search of a Thainess beyond the options of either Malaysia's domesticated internal exotics or Thailand's diasporic lost tribes.

In chapter 1, "Places," Johnson begins to unpack the changing dynamics of mobile villagers, social memory, cultural horizons, and territorial landscapes that structure his study. Villagers speak of an intimate past of local, inter-village, and regional movement and relations rather than grand historical tales of colonization or migration. Through local stories Johnson explicates the relationship of Ban Bor On village to the nearby commercial and administrative town center of Bandar Tumpat. But it is the subject of roads that topically

organizes this chapter. As markers of modernity, progress, and mobility, roads open Ban Bor On up to Bandar Tumpat as well as larger cities further afield in Kelantan and Narathiwat. Roads are socially vibrant worlds and lifelines for traders and smugglers, pilgrims and monks, politicians and bureaucrats. And it is on and through roads that the Thainess of Ban Bor On is publicly displayed. Roadside rest pavilions and ordination processions along roads serve as aesthetically elaborated material and performative markers of a distinct, spatially situated ethnic identity for both the inhabitants of Ban Bor On and their Malay neighbors. Spirit-haunted pavilions and Buddhist ordination processions, in this sense, anchor the village in a cosmological register of cultural and historical difference that is simultaneously a source of pride and marginality, of local history and distant cultural ties.

In "Gaps," chapter 2, Johnson further explores the symbolism and practices of a local Thai Malaysian identity by investigating "the social and political production of ethnic invisibility" (p. 56) among Kelantanese Thais. The chapter opens with an extended account of the difficulty of choosing a logo for Ban Bor On's soccer team which can successfully negotiate the contrasting demands of Thai and Malaysian discourses about national cultural identity. Johnson then moves on to a detailed historical discussion of how the colonial demarcation of the international border between the two nations shaped discourses of geopolitical difference at the local level. The colonial and postcolonial Malaysian state's official categories of belonging have no determinate or substantive classificatory category for ethnic Thais (other than "Other"). The village of Ban Bor On, therefore, dwells in the social ambiguity of an unmarked, invisible peripheral ethnicity. This complicates and confounds its residents' ability to easily or obviously situate themselves in relation to many of the possible discourses of identification that speak to them. Combined with the fact that Thai Kelantanese are native-born citizens who are at the

same time not *bumiputeras* ("sons of the soil"), this ambiguous bureaucratic classification frustrates and disadvantages patriotic residents of Ban Bor On as they seek out the benefits of Malaysian citizenship. It also complicates travel and economic activities in the hinterland of Kelantan and Thai border towns as villagers must disentangle the contextually shifting meaning and significance of being politically Malaysian but culturally and ethnically Thai. Johnson explores these trials and tribulations in detail at the close of this chapter by investigating the complexities of religious identification at play when Thai Kelantanese travel to Narathiwat to take part in *kathin* and other Buddhist ceremonies as well as when Thai monks and royal officials travel to Kelantan to manage monastic temples or to cultivate cultural exchanges.

Buddhism is situated front and center in the next two chapters of *The Buddha on Mecca's Verandah*. Johnson examines the significance of Buddhist temples, patronage, and aesthetics in the identity work of Thai Kelantanese in chapter 3, "Forms." A craze for monumental temple buildings and religious statuary has emerged among the Buddhists of Kelantan since the 1970s, and this competitive effort to attract tourists links together Buddhist monks, Malay politicians, Chinese businessmen, Thai bureaucrats, and Thai and Malay tourists in joint projects of patronage, prestige, and profit. These monumental religious forms have redefined the local distinctiveness of Thai Kelantanese within Malaysia even as the building projects have embedded them in relations of exchange with actors who live far outside their local villages. In particular, these projects entangle Thai Theravada communities more deeply with rural and urban Chinese Malays, both in Kelantan and beyond. As a result, syncretic Sinic religious beliefs and aesthetics have gained prominence in these building projects even as Kelantanese Buddhist temples have become more dependent upon a boom in Chinese religious tourism. Through extended and close analysis of

several temples' building projects and their associated festivals, Johnson explicates how the accompanying economic wealth, public visibility, and increased status also produces social discord within local villages as difficult questions about financial propriety, interreligious harmony, cultural authenticity, and spiritual orthodoxy are raised. The increasing public visibility and prominence of Buddhist culture, moreover, threatens to trigger the ire of conservative Muslims who have historically practiced noninterference in Kelantan Thai temple affairs.

In chapter 4, "Circuits," Johnson examines how the ambiguity of Thainess is also reflected in the unusual institutional management of Kelantanese Buddhist monks. While the ecclesiastical administration of Kelantan's Buddhist Sangha is formally an extension of Thailand's national monastic establishment, Kelantan's chief monk also receives his official appointment to office from the Kelantanese sultan. This dual form of religio-political rule is not found, however, in the Buddhist Sangha of other northern Malay states, such as Kedah and Perlis. Turning again to social history, Johnson investigates these complicated circuits of institutional power by analyzing the unique trajectories of local history, cultural memory, and social identity that were unleashed by Siam's colonial-era political response to British administrative encroachment in Kelantan. He shows how these dynamics laid the foundation for the overlapping sovereignties, cross-cultural patronage, and interlocking royalist clientalism which has embedded Thai Kelantanese monks firmly within the interfaith camaraderie and politico-cultural aura of both Chakri monarchs and Kelantanese sultans. Despite Kelantanese Thai anxieties over discrimination and local tensions between Buddhists and Muslims, this amicable conjoined model of interfaith patronage and protection endures up until the present. Moreover, Kelantan Thai village headmen, *nura* artists, and lay temple representatives are also embedded in clientalistic relations with local Malay royalty and politicians,

such that while the villagers of Ban Bor On are the proud subjects of two kings, they unambiguously perceive themselves as the loyal, patriotic citizens of only Malaysia.

Johnson takes up the question of how Ban Bor On has responded to Thailand's cultural nationalist discourse in chapter 5, "Dreams." He investigates this issue by examining three forms of twentieth-century long-distance cultural exchange and circulation: missionary monks, territorial migration, and televised mass media. Thus, he documents the local influence and prestige of establishment *thammathut* missionary monks in the 1960s and a newer breed of Dhammakaya missionary monks in the 1990s. Buddhist missionizing and its discourses of orthodoxy entangle Ban Bor On in Thai debates about cultural identification. Prime minister Phibul's mid-twentieth-century program of creating ethnic Thai agricultural communes in Thailand's ethnic Malay-majority Narathiwat province, however, also raised the challenge of political identification. When creating these communes, the Thai state encouraged Kelantanese Thai to migrate across the border and settle in them. Ultimately, the success of the communes in attracting and holding Kelantan Thai was uneven, while their ability to replace the political loyalty of migrants was quite limited. Finally, Johnson briefly examines how Ban Bor On residents watch much more Thai than Malay television. This disproportionate exposure to Thailand's culture industries, ironically, suffuses their daily lives with the cultural and historical symbolism, narratives, and representational politics of "a Buddhist state they feel a strange affinity with but to which they do not want to belong" (p. 170).

In his conclusion Johnson highlights several developments since 2002 that reinforce his overarching argument that Thai Kelantanese are active agents self-reflexively negotiating a dizzying flow of people, objects, and symbols, and that through this negotiation they cultivate a collective identity that contests their marginality and social

invisibility as cultural and ethnic actors within Malaysia. He reiterates the importance of daily encounters at borders and boundaries in this project of collective self-constitution, the gaps within official imaginaries and narratives that facilitate such local agency, the unsettling impossibility that shadows all Thai Kelantanese efforts at definitively claiming a stable collective identity, and the fact that even small rural communities now act within expansive and confusing social horizons. In the process of summarizing his argument, Johnson subtly reinforces the reader's realization that while Buddhist actors, institutions, objects, and practices often have been a frequent topic of investigation, his overarching and central analytic goal has been to explain the general social dynamics underlying the politics of collective identification among a marginal and frequently invisible ethno-religious minority within modern Malaysia.

Nevertheless, the numerous substantive issues and analytic questions that Johnson explores in this empirically rich, clearly written ethnography highlight a variety of topics that scholars of Buddhism would benefit from paying more attention to and examining in greater detail. Given how frequently *The Buddha on Mecca's Verandah* turns to an analysis of Buddhist discourses, rituals, institutions, and material cultures in Thai Kelantanese society, in the end the book paints a relatively nuanced portrait of a Buddhist minority community living in the shadow of an ethnically, culturally, and religiously affiliated national majority on the opposite side of a nearby international border. The monograph, therefore, presents a case study not only for imagining Buddhism in border zones, but for reflecting on how diasporic settings, majority-minority relations, and the shifting contextual dynamics of collective identification shape the lives of Asian Buddhists. Comparing the fate of Kelantanese Thai with ethnic Thais in other northern Malay states would obviously prove illuminating, as would comparing Thai Buddhists in Malaysia with other Buddhist

communities living in similar situations, such as Chakma Buddhists in eastern Bangladesh and Tai Buddhists in southern China.

Buddhist minorities in Asia are a generally understudied phenomenon. Johnson's monograph obviously highlights this phenomenon and documents its substantive terrain in one particularly interesting border zone. In addition, it implicitly raises questions about the differing cultural, social, and political fortunes of migrant and nonmigrant Buddhist minorities within Muslim-, Christian-, or Hindu-majority Asian nation-states. How significantly does the historical status of being native-born rather than a migrant influence the character and dynamics of different minority Buddhist communities? The differing religious, historical, and political fortunes of Thai, Chinese, and other Buddhist communities in Malaysia is a question that any reader of *The Buddha on Mecca's Verandah* naturally wonders about after finishing Johnson's book. Similar questions, however, are worth exploring through comparative reflections on native-born versus migrant Buddhist-minority communities in other Asian countries, such as India, Nepal, Vietnam, or Indonesia, for example.

Johnson's arguments about the dynamics of collective identification among Kelantanese Thai places front and center the undeniably entangled interrelationship between multiple types of identification. Identity claims and discourses about ethnicity, religion, nationality, and cultural heritage are inevitably so thoroughly intertwined in the lives of the villagers of Ban Bor On that it is often difficult to disentangle and distinguish between these registers of identity, both substantively and analytically. This tendency for ethnic, religious, national, and cultural markers to collapse into each other in both discourse and practice is a consistent feature of modern social life that Buddhist studies scholars would do well to more closely and critically attend to in their descriptions, interpretations, and analyses. Buddhist ac-

tors and institutions often spend much effort trying to either fuse together or pry apart these categories of identification, depending upon the situation at hand. *The Buddha on Mecca's Verandah* places these sorts of questions and dynamics at the center of its analysis. As a result, the reader gains insight into the mix of rhetorical techniques, situational contexts, and strategic interests that shape how a particular community of Buddhists in a particular time and place tries to both conflate and distinguish between Buddhism and nationality, ethnicity, and culture. Equally illuminating is the varied success, stability, and consequences that result from these efforts at conflation and distinction. In all of these ways, Johnson's monograph raises descriptive dilemmas and interpretative questions that are worth pursuing more broadly in academic scholarship on modern Asian Buddhism.

Lastly, *The Mecca on Buddha's Verandah* highlights the importance of thinking about transnationalism in the lives of what might at first glance seem like relatively rural, relatively sedentary contemporary Buddhists. The villagers of Ban Bor On are a very mobile community, however, as Johnson makes clear. And yet their eagerness and ability to travel across national borders is not the only reason that they live in an irreducibly transnational Buddhist world. Buddhist actors, institutions, and discourses from across national borders actively seek them out as well. In this sense, Johnson's description and analysis highlight just how much mobility and transnationalism define the lives of Buddhists in Asia. In particular, the lives of Kelantanese Thais reveals how important and significant transnational Buddhist ecclesiastical bureaucracies and culture industries are in Asia. Many scholars have studied the ecclesiastical structure of the Sangha as a national organization, but few have explored the transnational reach of these national institutions. Similarly, the transnational spread and influence of Buddhist culture industries is also a topic worthy of increased study in our increasingly globalized re-

ligious world. Johnson's book points in suggestive analytic directions, therefore, when considering how investigations of transnationalism could enrich our understanding of Buddhist society and culture in contemporary Asia.

The Mecca on Buddha's Verandah successfully avoids excessive academic jargon, engagingly employs ethnographic vignettes, and effectively integrates the personal voices and narratives of Ban Bor On villagers into Johnson's picture of Buddhist minorities in a multicultural border zone. Ethnography and history are continuously integrated in the empirical descriptions and analytic claims presented in the monograph, and much of the book's argument relies on the interpretive interweaving of historical narratives, social memories, and contemporary observations in order to explicate current social dynamics. In chapter after chapter, Johnson moves back and forth between his observations and conversations in the present with his ethnographic informants and the fine-tuned historical reconstruction of colonial and postcolonial structural and long-term dynamics that have shaped the environment in which the villagers of Ban Bor On live and act. The voice and perspective of the author is effectively personalized and situated for the readers in a more robust than usual fashion, in part because Johnson's family on his mother side comes from the village. The anthropologist in this sense is something of a local and native already before arriving in his field site, and Johnson discretely pays attention to this dynamic and bias when it is methodologically relevant to the subject at hand. The author carefully and effectively locates his argument within the relevant anthropological and historical scholarly literatures, although one wishes at times that he had more explicitly highlighted how his study extends or contributes to existing scholarly debates. The overall vision of Ban Bor On as a mobile village of Thai Buddhists struggling with and against their invisible, minority, and peripheral status as Malaysia citizens is illuminating, accessible, and thought-provoking

whether one is a general academic reader or a regional or disciplinary specialist.

The book is particularly strong in conveying not only the individual voices and perspectives of particular inhabitants of Ban Bor On, but also the collective attitudes and worldview of the village as a whole. When Johnson discusses issues of contention within the village, however, there is much less sense of how, if at all, different perspective, attitudes, and actions might reflect social variables. Do disagreements among villagers about the behavior and teaching of Dhammakaya missionary monks, for instance, reflect social distinctions in terms of education, class, gender, or other social dimensions? How, if at all, is the appeal and influence of Thai television and mass media mediated by differences in generation, education, or literacy? In this regard one wishes that Johnson had complicated more consistently the recourse to a somewhat singular or homogenous communal voice when representing the experience and perspective of Ban Bor On villagers. In a similar vein, while historical transformations at the scale of Kelantan, the border region, or the Thai and Malaysian nations is closely attended to, the reader has a less precise sense of how, for example, ecclesiastical, social, or political relations at the village level have changed over the course of the past decades or century. Ironically, therefore, social relations at this more intimate and personal level can come across as more enduring and unchanging than Johnson probably intends to suggest.

Analytically, Johnson highlights the importance of understanding the "puzzle of Thainess" within the lives of the villagers of Ban Bor On--and of Kelantanese Thai more generally--if one is to understand the dynamics of social identification among this ethno-religious minority. Even though there is no consensus on how it should be defined or performed, "Thainess permeates everyday life in Kelantan's Thai villages" (p. xv), according to Johnson. At the same time, however, he also

observes that "during [his] stay in Ban Bor On, villagers never referred to their behavior as an indicator of Thainess" (p. xv). This raises complicated epistemological and analytic questions that Johnson sidesteps for the most part. As he notes, the idea of "Thainess" is an explicit concept, discourse, and meta-narrative within Thailand that is so prominent and prevalent that presumably almost all Thai citizens take note of and act in relation to it. This is not the case in Malaysia, however, and many of Johnson's informants looked puzzled when he asked them about "Thainess." Treating "Thainess" as the taken-for-granted, implicit frame of reference for thought and behavior in the life of Kelantanese Thais, therefore, is a challenging enough interpretive stance. But making it descriptively and analytically the center of his anthropological explanation of the underlying dynamics driving their everyday experience and behavior, their marginality, and their practices of social identification is even more complicated and theoretically challenging. In what sense is "Thainess" the central social and cultural puzzle for the Kelantanese Thai if the concept doesn't resonate in their own consciousness or explicit statements? Is there another, less singular frame available for better understanding the conundrum of social identification among this marginal minority population?

Finally, Johnson does a wonderful job over the course of his monograph in conveying the numerous comparative points of symbolic and social reference against which the villagers of Ban Bor On contrast themselves in their work of self-identification. Language, occupation, religious behavior (alms rounds, ordination processes, spirit worship), the built environment (monasteries, rest pavilions, and domestic architecture), eating habits, clothing, and attire--these are just some of the symbolic points of contrast evoked by villagers in a conscious fashion. Similarly, there are many social groups against which his informants explicitly define themselves--urban and rural Malaysian Chinese, Malay peasants, Malay politi-

cians, Malay royalty, Southern Thais, Central Thais, Thai royalty, Thai bureaucrats and administrators, to name just a few. One wishes, however, that Johnson had thematically mapped in a more overarching and systemic fashion this total field of symbolic and social points of contrastive reference available when ethnic Thai Malays seek to distinguish themselves in different types of situations. One benefit of this analytic mapping is that it would allow one to discern more nuanced patterns in how different types of contrasting references are utilized in different contexts and in the pursuit of different goals. In this way, structure and patterns in the identity work of Kelantanese Thai would become more obvious, as would contextual strategies and techniques in the negotiation of sociocultural marginality and ambiguity. And this in turn would enable a scholar of religion, for instance, to more precisely understand when, where, and how the idea of Buddhism does (and by extensions does not) become salient or influential in the production of Thai Kelantanese identity. Such mapping would be especially useful for scholars seeking to understand how religious, ethnic, cultural, and national markers of collective identity are either fused with or separated from each other in actual daily practice. In such a fashion, scholars could gain even greater clarity and precision in understanding the Buddhist idioms and salience of Thai Malay collective identity in the contemporary world.

Notes

[1]. Eng-Soon Teoh, *Malayan Buddhism: A Critical Examination* (Singapore: D. Moore for Eastern Universities Press, 1963); Piya Tan, *Charisma in Buddhism* (Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Dharmafarer Enterprises, 1992); and Judith Nagata, "Limits to the Indigenisation of Buddhism in Malaysia, with a Focus on the Religious Community in Malaysia," in *Dimensions of Tradition and Development in Malaysia*, ed. Rokiah Talib and Tan Chee-Beng (Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Pelanduk, 1995), 307-344.

[2]. Jeffrey Samuels, "'Forget Not Your Old Country': Absence, Identity, and Marginalization in the Practice and Development of Sri Lankan Buddhism in Malaysia," *South Asian Diaspora* 3, no. 1 (2011): 117-132.

[3]. Louis Golomb, *Brokers of Morality: Thai Ethnic Adaptation in a Rural Malaysian Setting* (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1978); and Robert Winzeler, *Ethnic Relations in Kelantan: A Study of the Chinese and Thai as Ethnic Minorities in a Malay State* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[4]. Mohamed Yusoff Ismail, *Buddhism and Ethnicity: Social Organization of a Buddhist Temple in Kelantan* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993).

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Citation: Erick White. Review of Johnson, Irving Chan. *The Buddha on Mecca's Verandah: Encounters, Mobilities, and Histories along the Malaysian-Thai Border*. H-Buddhism, H-Net Reviews. January, 2017.

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