



Anthony R. Walker, ed., *Pika-Pika: The Flashing Firefly: Essays for Pauline Walker by her Friends in the Arts and Social Sciences*

New Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 2009. 489 pages, b/w photos, maps, index. Paper, US\$36.00. ISBN-10: 8170750873 and ISBN-13: 9788170750871.

PIKA-PIKA is an onomatopoeic Japanese term that mimics the flashing of fireflies at eventide. The title is a metaphor for Pauline Hetland Walker (1938–2005), whom the volume commemorates. Pauline was a writer, reporter, teacher, dance critic, and collector of Asian fine arts. She spent many years in Asia interfacing with a wide variety of peoples. During much of that time she was accompanied by Anthony Walker, the great student of the Lahu people of Southeast Asia.

The twenty-one articles in the volume are authored by a range of scholars in the arts and social sciences and friends of the Walkers. Most are ethnographic and deal with topics of especial interest to their authors. The book is divided into sections dealing with music, song, and dance; literature, poetry, and drama; pottery; traditional crafts and craftsmanship; women's issues; comparative healing practices; and religious diversity, myth, and ritual. The authors have diverse backgrounds, yet all shared common interests with Pauline, whose presence provides a unifying touchstone to the content of the collection. Most of the articles deal with aspects of cultures in Asia, including mountain goddess fertility rites in northeast Japan by Richard Moore, the impact of technology on Javanese *wayang kulit* performance by Roger Long, Korean sex slaves during the Japanese Occupation by Kim Myung-hye, faith healers in Nepal by Deborah S. Akers, and the sacred music of the Karens in Thailand by Elizabeth Hinton. Several chapters deal with other areas, including crafts and commercialization among the Hopi of the American southwest by Shuichi Nagata, the relation of *El Dorado* legends to Ika Indian traditions in northeastern Colombia by Donald Tayler, and a piece on dance, trance, and ritual in Haiti by Erika Bourguignon. Where relevant, Chinese, Japanese, or Korean scripts are included.

One of the outstanding papers in the collection is James A. Matisoff's study entitled "Syntactic Parallelism and Morphological Elaboration in Lahu Religious Poetry." The Lahu, who speak a Tibeto-Burman language, are found in southwest China and the uplands, especially Burma and Thailand. Matisoff discusses relations between vernacular and ritual speech. He makes important observations on the rhetorical style of Lahu ritual in regards to the use of compounding syllables that compensate for problems of homophony which are the result of the monosyllabic nature of Lahu. Matisoff coins the phrase "syntactic parallelism" to describe the "juxtaposition of entire clauses whose grammatical structures are identical, and where some of the lexical items filling the corresponding grammatical slots are also the same, while others are different but semantically correlative" (119). The study presents examples of the principle in regards to the morphological elaboration of imagery in a hunting ritual text collected by Anthony Walker in the 1970s. The

findings have implications not only for Lahu ritual language (now endangered) but possibly for appreciating the rhetorical complexity of related languages in southwest China and relevant areas of Southeast Asia.

The article entitled “A Unique South Indian Tradition: Toda Dress and Embroidery,” by Tarun Chhabra, presents a comprehensive look at dress, ritual, and social change among the approximately 1,400 Toda people of south peninsular India. The discussion involves issues of gender, technology, the emergence of “modern” designs and techniques, and intertextuality with other mediums of expression. Of especial interest is the attention to native understandings of the aesthetics of the made objects. For instance, the rough, obverse side of a woven pattern cloth is more appealing to Toda sensitivities than the smoother obverse side which tends to be displayed by non-Toda consumers. The author also notes the mutual influences in terms of technique and terminology between rattan braiding in temple and house building (done by males) and the embroidery work (done by females), even though the activities are gender specific. The textile patterns are illustrated by an array of photographs, many showing links with naturalistic elements such as honeycombs, hare’s ears, and giant squirrels. There is also a section providing examples of folk songs conveying the aesthetics and manner of display of Toda garb. For instance, “She is wearing a new cloak without embroidery; her arms are adorned with silver bracelets” (216).

The topic of Buddhist mobility and pilgrimage to sacred sites is explored in Paul T. Cohen’s article “In the Footsteps of Buddha: Mobility and Resistance in the Upper Mekong.” The study concentrates on acts of cross-border pilgrimage and the revival of Buddhism among the Tai Lue (Dai nationality), who live in the Sipsong Panna (Xishuangbanna) region of southwest China and contiguous cultural areas of Southeast Asia. The author notes the traditional importance of kinship and “memories” of place, guardian spirits, and migrations in establishing and maintaining links among Lue populations separated by great expanses of time and space. Another factor is the phenomena of highly mobile monks who take inspiration from travel accounts of Buddha. This mobility is discussed in the context of the revival of Theravada Buddhism and the monkhood in Sipsong Panna beginning in the early 1980s after the devastation of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). One factor in this revival is the promotion of Tai Lue popular music since the 1990s. This medium of communication was introduced by two senior monks who had previously spent time in northern Thailand. The content of the pop songs encourages the study of traditional *dhamma* script, and bands often perform at Buddhist village festivals. Other influences of the cross-border pilgrimages are seen in temple architecture and the multiplication of reliquaries.

These articles typify the rich content of the volume. Although the very personal framing (including the cover image by son Michael) departs from usual expectations of ethnographic collections, the diversity of writings offer much to a wide spectrum of readers with an interest in ethnography and Asia.

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