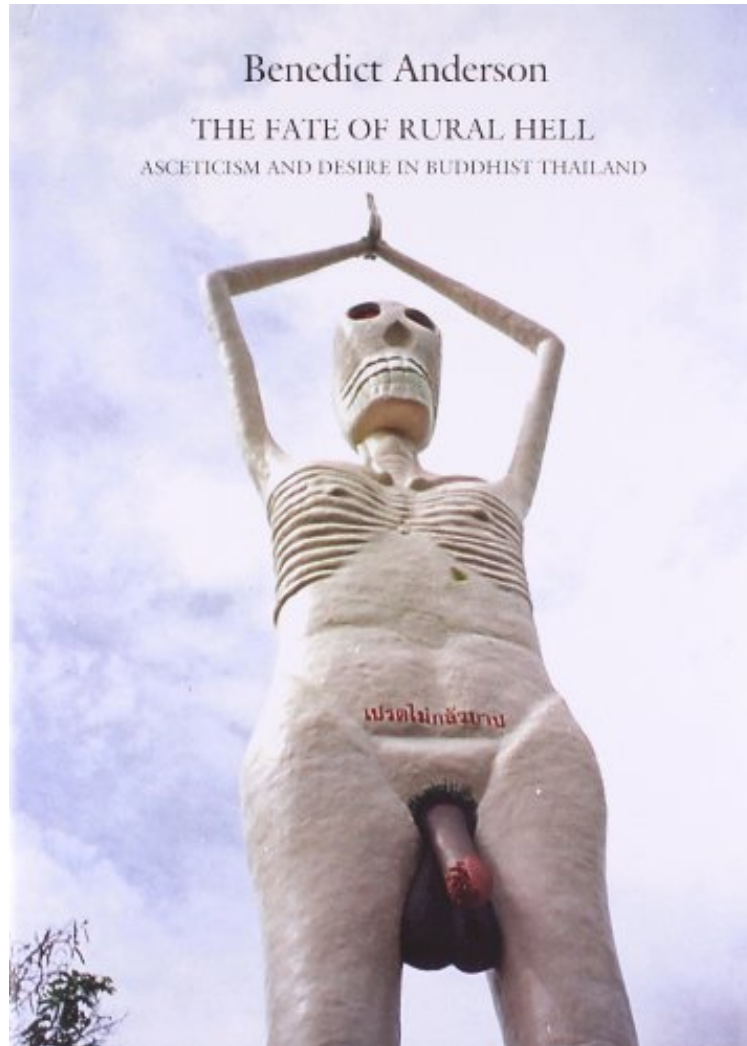


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# The Fate of Rural Hell: Asceticism and Desire in Buddhist Thailand

*Benedict Anderson*

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**Benedict Anderson : The Fate of Rural Hell: Asceticism and Desire in Buddhist Thailand** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Fate of Rural Hell: Asceticism and Desire in Buddhist Thailand:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. One of a kind By JDV As far as I know, this is the only book written that discusses the "Hell Temples" of Thailand. I have been to the one in Khorat, and this one in Suphanburi. What I found to be the most useful is translations of the Thai writing on the various sculptures that inform the reader about the "sins" that the tormented are suffering for. I took this book with me in Oct of 2012 to Wat Phai Rong Wua, and it was a great aid in understanding the displays. This book is definitely one of a kind. Buy it if you are interested in Thai Buddhism, occultism, ghosts, or legends...or just want a deeper understanding of Thai culture. These temples are a

kind of living "Dante's Inferno"--meant to dissuade sinners from deviating from the Buddhist path. In my opinion, they are also a sort of gimmick for generating money for the temples. As are most of the "gimmicks" that require feeding money into displays found in many Thai temples. Overall, small book, great photos, interesting text and subject. I would buy another copy if the one I have got lost or damaged--just to have it. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Interesting  
By LanceManion I notice a lot of 'hell' tableau in Thai Temples, particularly in the far north (Nan and Phayao). This book could do a better job of explaining how this has come about, what's changed in Thai religious culture, etc. Very descriptive, leaves one wanting some explanation. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.  
Hell  
By Tony Milton Interesting insights about Theravada Buddhism in Thailand. Copious photographs of Hells in rural Temples. Great biographical information about the monks and artists involved in creating these special spaces.

In 1975, when political scientist Benedict Anderson reached Wat Phai Rong Wua, a massive temple complex in rural Thailand conceived by Buddhist monk Luang Phor Khom, he felt he had wandered into a demented Disneyland. One of the worlds most bizarre tourist attractions, Wat Phai Rong Wua was designed as a cautionary museum of sorts; its gruesome statues depict violent and torturous scenes that showcase what hell may be like. Over the next few decades, Anderson, who is best known for his work, *Imagined Communities*, found himself transfixed by this unusual amalgamation of objects, returning several times to see attractions like the largest metal-cast Buddha figure in the world and the Palace of a Hundred Spires. The concrete statuary and perverse art in Luang Phors personal museum of hell included, side by side, an upright human skeleton in a glass cabinet and a life-size replica of Michelangelos gigantic nude David, wearing fashionable red underpants from the top of which poked part of a swollen, un-Florentine penis, alongside dozens of statues of evildoers being ferociously punished in their afterlife.

Anderson presents us with a miniature masterpiece of political and social interpretation, using a popular but atypical religious site to explore, from an unusual angle, the intersection of Buddhist piety, educational and social hierarchy, erotic sensibilities, and the remnants of rural feudalism in Thai society as it lurches unevenly toward more egalitarian relations. This brief but gripping book leaves a long, complex, and lasting taste on the mental palate.