



Culture and Customs of Thailand (Cultures and Customs of the World)

Arne Kislenko

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Thailand is rapidly industrializing, dramatically improving the living standards of its people, and gradually developing a more democratic society. Despite such profound changes, traditional Thai culture has not only survived, but has also, in many respects, prospered. Although famous for its food, and despite its increasing popularity as a tourist destination, Thailand remains relatively unknown to most Westerners. *Culture and Customs of Thailand* presents the traditional culture and customs against the backdrop of modern times.

Thailand has always been an important Southeast Asian country. With a long-reigning monarchy, it is the only country in the region that has never been colonized by a Western power or suffered bloody revolutions and wars. It was the first Asian country to establish diplomatic relations with the United States, and has remained a constant ally. Thailand has emerged as a considerable economic force as the world's largest rice and rubber producer and remains a regional political power. Against this historical framework, Kislenko deftly introduces the traditional and modern strands of the dominant Buddhist faith and other religions, such as animism. Coverage includes literature, the arts, architecture—including the Thai Wat—food and dress, gender and marriage, festivals and fun, and social customs. Kislenko also balances the portrait with discussions of threats from globalization, AIDS and sex tourism, the drug trade, and corruption in business and government. Evocative photos, a country map, a timeline, and a chronology complete the coverage. This reference is the best source for students and general readers to gain substantial, sweeping insight into the Thais and their land of smiles.

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