BUDDHISM, MODERNITY, AND
THE STATE IN ASIA

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BUDDHISM, MODERNITY, AND
THE STATE IN ASIA

FORMS OF ENGAGEMENT

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*John Whalen-Bridge and
Pattana Kitiarsa*

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Dedicated to Pattana Kitiarsa, 1968–2013

Pattana Kitiarsa, who has died at 45, was an exceptional, inspiring yet humble scholar. Born in Nong Khai, a northeastern province in Thailand, Pattana joined the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, in 2007. He was an exemplary colleague who selflessly gave of himself to students and coworkers. During his life he worked tirelessly to produce an enormous number of works, in Thai and English, and established himself as a respected scholar of popular Buddhism and transnational migration. His publications helped propel the cultural lifeworlds of Thai magical monks, migrant workers, and Muay Thai boxers into prominence in international academic debates. Battling illness he completed his last book, Medium, Monks, & Amulets, which came out less than three months before his death. What is even more spectacular is how Pattana was devoted to community service for the benefit of Thai migrant workers in Singapore. Even his deteriorating health by late 2012 did not stop him from his volunteerism, a reason why the Thai migrant community turned out in full force to pay their respects during his wake. Pattana will be greatly missed but his life, deeds, and scholarship will live on in our hearts and minds. He is survived by wife, Rungnapa, daughter, Nanrawee, and son, Tantham, aged 15 and 13 respectively.

—Goh Beng Lan

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