

REZENSIONEN

Harald Uhlig (ed.): Spontaneous and planned settlement in Southeast Asia. Forest clearing and recent pioneer colonization in the ASEAN Countries, and two Case Studies on Thailand.

Hamburg: Institute of Asian Affairs 1984. xv + 331 p. (=Giessener Geographische Schriften, vol. 58).

Between ecological peril and settlers' plight: towards positive recognition of unplanned colonization? This key question is the main implication of a vital and complex, but surprisingly under-researched issue of obvious significance.

Over the last thirty years, deforestation and agricultural expansion in Southeast Asia have been going on at an increasingly rapid pace, largely without adequate intervention by governments. The settlement process has reached such tremendous proportions that it may be likened to the "medieval clearing period" in Central Europe or the colonization of North America during the 18th and 19th centuries. It is true that ecological issues in developing countries have attracted growing attention and publicity, especially, in the context of this book, with regard to the severe threat to some of the world's largest untouched forest reserves in Southeast Asia. From this angle even the government directed "transmigration" schemes in Indonesia have been seriously questioned although previously they had received predominantly favourable attention. In the wake of this criticism large-scale projects are being revised, such as the vast and much publicized Indonesian-German development project in East Kalimantan. Both the ecological peril and the more conspicuous planned development schemes, are thus well known facts of the secular change processes that are taking place. However, the issues of unplanned colonization are considerably less understood and documented. There is a surprising lack of research on the very extent of unplanned agricultural expansion, the ambivalent effects of legal implications, and the complex socio-economic mechanism at work. Moreover, "pioneer" settlement activities are typically dismissed as illegal, backward and ecologically destructive, to cite the stereotype connotations of "shifting cultivation". This, or the synonymous term "swiddening", is in fact the central theme of Professor Uhlig's seminal publication, or more precisely, his plea for a more differentiated view of the complexities that are

involved.

Shifting cultivation, the oldest form of agriculture, is mostly associated with the "backward" agricultural practices of hilltribe communities. In its established traditional manner, it is even recognized as a functioning, i.e., ecologically integrated form of crop and soil management. "Primitive" as it may appear on the surface, it has been seen in contrast with the intensive and permanent form of Southeast Asian agriculture which is associated with the "rice-bowl" image. However, three important things are largely overlooked in this view: firstly, every single rice-bowl originally developed from forest or swamp clearing through an initial stage of swiddening; secondly, permanent dry-land (or up-land) cultivation has long been established as an important and viable alternative for agricultural diversification; and thirdly, there is a tremendous revival of various forms of swiddeening by "low-land" farmers who are opening up large tracts of forest areas. Facilitated by the tractor and the motor saw as well as reinforced by motorization and road networks, forest clearing and shifting cultivation, especially in terms of exploitative commercial schemes, have reached alarming dimensions. Even casual observations would confirm this, particularly in Thailand, where the implications of corruption, poverty and social conflict have been exposed by a startling movie: "Kun Kru Kon Mai", the moving story of an honest young teacher in his sadly lost battle against log poachers and their accomplices, the corrupt petty bureaucrats.

Besides the destructive commercial schemes, thousands of small scale rural "squatters" are at work. Their plight bears witness of the conflicting goals of preservation of natural resources, and the "land hunger" of the growing population. The key question involved is how far and how fast the initial period of wasteful shifting cultivation can be transformed into a system of permanent and ecologically balanced agriculture. At this point positive recognition and circumspect intervention by government is badly needed, for laissez-faire would hasten ecological disasters, and maintaining the stance of illegality would be unrealistic and counterproductive, especially in those large areas where forest destruction is an irreversible fact. The order of the day therefore is a pragmatic policy which, if consistently enforced, could prevent further deterioration while recognizing and utilizing the economic and human potential of "pioneer" settlement. This recommendation, implicit rather than explicitly stated, stands out

as the main conclusion of the book.

The publication is organized into two main parts, (i) a state-of-the-art treatise by H. Uhlig on spontaneous and planned agricultural settlement in the four largest ASEAN countries, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia, and (ii) case studies on two typical areas in Thailand - the Khorat Escarpment and the Chonburi Hinterland, authored by R. Riethmüller et al. The two main parts (118 and 148 p., respectively) are accompanied by an Appendix on the agricultural soil surveys undertaken in the study areas, and another one (authored by M. Schmetz and C. Leitzmann) on migration and nutrition in Thailand.

Supported by a comprehensive literature review, Part I provides a most interesting comparative view on the amazing variety and complexity of spontaneous and planned settlement and their relative importance. It is interesting to note that spontaneous colonization in Thailand has opened up five to six times more area than the land settlements that have been organized mainly by the Department of Public Welfare and the Ministry of Agriculture. Malaysia, in contrast, does not have any significant spontaneous agricultural settlement activities, with the exception of East Malaysia (Borneo), as the well known FELDA schemes have absolutely dominated. Deliberately market oriented, FELDA has concentrated on the development of oil palm, rubber and cassava schemes for Bumiputra-smallholders. Especially in the "Jengka Triangle" and in Pahang Tenggara, the FELDA schemes have created "agropolitan" towns from where the settlers commute to the plantation areas. In the Philippines in turn, spontaneous settlements have played a greater role than the state-directed "resettlement" schemes which are largely related to the land reform policy. While the overview on Malaysia is more detailed and longer for the obvious reasons of its large size and diversity, and its extremely lopsided population distribution. The success and failures of Indonesia's massive "transmigrasi" policy have dominated the relevant literature but even in Indonesia the various forms of spontaneous land settlement have been at least as significant in extent and impact.

Finally, the country studies are complemented by a brief assessment of the pro's and con's of spontaneous versus planned settlement. In conclusion, this section confirms the need for a deliberate policy towards recognizing the potential of the spontaneous "pioneers" in order to come to terms with the tremendous ecological and socio-economic problems involved.

The two case studies from Thailand are the outcome of a research grant by the Volkswagen Foundation. Unfortunately an adequately appreciative comment would be beyond the scope of this review. Suffice it to say therefore that they in themselves are outstanding examples of "pioneer" work, carefully designed, thoroughly conducted and very well documented research studies that are accompanied by a series of telling photo illustrations. Again, the case study material very effectively supports the central hypothesis of the publication.

One would hope that the pioneering work by the eminently competent scholar Harald Uhlig and his research associates will be followed up by further research and ultimately, positive action. In fact the UN Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat, Nairobi) will hold a closely related international seminar in November 1985: Entitled "Spontaneous Land Settlements in Rural Regions: Issues and Opportunities", the seminar aims at exchanging recent experiences and recommending policies and actions in this highly significant but woefully underrepresented field of development research.

H. Detlef Kammeier, Bangkok

Keiko Yamane: Das japanische Kino. Geschichte - Filme - Regisseure. Report, Film.
Bucher Verlag, München, 1985. 240 Seiten, Abb.

Mehr als Kurosawa und Oshima: Daß japanische Filmkunst mehr umfaßt als die Samurai-Filme des Altmeisters Akira Kurosawa und die Brutal-Pornos von Nagisa Oshima, kann jetzt endlich auch der bundesdeutsche Kino-Freund in detail nachlesen. In Keiko Yamanes Neuerscheinung "Das japanische Kino. Geschichte - Filme - Regisseure" nämlich, jüngst herausgegeben vom Deutschen Filmmuseum Frankfurt.

Ein Vierteljahrhundert, nachdem der US-Filmcrack Donald Richi - spannend wie ein Krimi - der westlichen Welt Leinwandkunst im fernen Inselreich vorstellte ("The Japanese Film - Art and Industry", New York 1960), kann sich jetzt auch der deutsche Interessierte kundig machen - die Kost ist freilich unvergleichlich trockener.

Nach einer kurzen Einführung über Nippons Filmgeschichte, ergänzt durch eine Darstellung des Heute (Autor: Akira Shimizu), stellt die Autorin die über 100 Filme vor, die währen der großen "Japan-Retro" des Deutschen Filmmuseums in Frankfurt vom November 1984 bis Juni dieses Jahres ge-