

the Himalayan crisis, it is a particular merit of the work not to leave him/her in despair. The suggestions and future strategies which represent a large number of experts' findings show an affectionate concern for the many peoples dependent on the Himalayas. As a scientifically comprehensive and colourfully written work, it deserves the attention of all those interested in an up-to-date overview of what has recently been done and what remains to be done for the Himalayan environment.

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KLAUS KRÜGER, *Regionale Entwicklung in Malaysia - Theoretische Grundlagen, empirischer Befund und regionalpolitische Schlußfolgerungen*. (Beiträge zur kommunalen und regionalen Planung 11). Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 1989. X, 370 pp., 19 maps and figs., 87 tabs., DM 73.-

This book (mainly a doctoral dissertation, Hanover University, 1986) has 5 chapters dealing with, briefly, the following topics: 1. Introduction (pp. 1-13); 2. Some theoretical approaches to a general interpretation and overcoming of regional disparities in development (pp. 14-118); 3. Fundamentals of the social and economic development of modern Malaysia (pp. 119-175); 4. Regional disparities and regional policy in Malaysia (pp. 176-263); 5. Summary and conclusions (pp. 264-275). In addition, there are two appendices consisting of a fairly voluminous array of statistical tables on the one hand (pp. 276-353), and a short textual supplement on the other (pp. 354-355). Finally, the reader will find himself confronted with a list of references which casts some light on the literature selected (and neglected) for the purpose of this study, thus showing, upon closer examination of the titles cited, that there are only a few which were not referred to in the previous chapters. This is of course an absolutely legitimate method, and it is perfectly suited to stress a certain tenor of argumentation. So far, so good.

If one goes more into detail, however, one will be more and more convinced that this book has its weaknesses. This is not so obvious at the beginning where, in his "Introduction", the author lists the points he wants to clarify in the following chapters. Such a step is formally correct, it demarcates the range of problems, paves the way for subsequent research, and sets the goals envisaged. But everything is said in such a complicated manner that it tends to obscure rather than to explain.

The second chapter leads into the somewhat obsolete "boutique fantastique" of global theories and highly artificial scenarios which, bright or

gloomy, all share the misfortune of being insufficient means for planning and development, especially when unforeseen political events have spoiled all fancy visions in the course of time. No wonder that the author, after having discussed the whole parade of invalid academic constructions, comes to the conclusion that now as before all theories of this kind are inadequate for a precise analysis of the social and economic development of underdeveloped countries. The reader for his part, if he has survived this lengthy and enervating account, is inclined to ask what all this fruitless theorizing is good for. More brevity would doubtless have been better.

Chapter 3, concentrating on Malaysia proper, depicts her geographical and historical background more briefly though it disappoints in other ways. The treatment of the geographical facts is carried out under compulsion and with obviously little liking. And when the author comes to the discussion of the country's more recent history, he quotes no more than a handful of competent informants while, on the other hand, he does not hesitate to cite a multitude of secondary (and even tertiary) sources which all share a noticeable uniformity of views. As a consequence, this chapter proves astonishingly insubstantial. Not only does it derive from partly unreliable sources, it also ignores the presence of diverging cultural traditions so that (to leave aside the smaller fry of criticism) the treatment of this chapter turns out to be - putting it mildly - only a partial success.

Chapter 4, which discusses regional disparities and regional policy of present-day Peninsular Malaysia, can be considered as the chief constituent and backbone of this book. It is thus the place where, at the latest, the author can demonstrate his knowledge of the country, his field experience and, not the least, his analytic skill. Indeed, here the author is not completely without merits, though there are faults and inconsistencies again. Thus, when e.g. West and East Coast regions, whose socio-economic patterns are incompatible in many ways, are simply treated on a par (as for instance on p. 177), we have a clear example of a misleading procedure, especially when phenomena such as "low income" or "poverty" are to be grasped correctly. No wonder that in his discussion of "poverty" and its criteria the author himself seems to have his doubts (as, for instance, on p. 186). Entirely unconvincing because of lack of reference, however, are the remarks on "New Land Development Strategy" (pp. 204-209) and on "in-situ Development Strategy" (pp. 209-212). Also, the following discussion is too poorly substantiated, and even subsequent concentration on two "selected growth centres" (i.e. Georgetown/Butterworth in the West, and Kuantan on the East Coast; vide pp. 221-238) presents planning visions instead of solid facts. Fortunately this chapter ends with systematic retrospects on the "Industrial Development of Penang since

1970", and ditto "... of Kuantan since 1970" (pp. 239-263), both being transparent and readily compatible. Though, all in all, more field experience, more clarity and conciseness would have done so much nicer.

Obviously in order to counteract possible criticism, the author in his "Summary and Conclusions" points to the inevitableness of scientific value judgements in general (p. 264). This is correct. But nonetheless, regardless of what is meant here in particular, well-read socio-economists can be considered sufficiently firm in this field since Max Weber's great essays on the theory of knowledge so that, provided with those unflinching tools, the author could have avoided many reefs.

To end this review in a mellow tone: No critic can claim perfection for himself, and he is far from any absolute "objectivism". The author for his part, especially when he is a beginner, would derive no benefit from merely being patted on the shoulders - "beginner's luck", when needed in stormy weather, can also be the chance to learn and do better in the future.

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WILFRIED WAGNER (Hrsg.), *Mentawai, Identität im Wandel auf indonesischen Außeninseln*. (Veröffentlichungen aus dem Übersee-Museum Bremen, Reihe C, Band 5). Bremen: Übersee-Museum Bremen, 1989. 230 pages.

The book contains seven articles on various aspects of the Mentawai Islands (Siberut, Sipora, North and South Pagai) which are located about 100 km west of Padang (West Sumatra). In early 1988 the editor organized a symposium on this archipelago at which most of the material of this book was presented as papers.

Reimar Schefold (University of Leiden) contributes two articles, one in German and one in English. The German article ("Religiöse Involution auf den Mentawai-Inseln: Veränderungen in den Tabubestimmungen und ihre Folgen") contains the most important arguments of an article published in 1976 (Reimar Schefold, Religious Involution: Internal Change and its Consequences in the Taboo-System of the Mentawaians. In: *Tropical Man* 5, pp. 46-81, 1976). The English article ("The Origins of the Woman on the Raft: on the Prehistory of the Mentawaians"), which is said to represent an extension and complement to the remarks on the prehistoric foundations of the culture of the Mentawaians in Schefold's book on ritual (Reimar Schefold, *Lia: das große Ritual auf den Mentawai-Inseln (Indonesien)*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer,