

have an intimate knowledge of what is going on in their respective field of research. This is due to the simple fact that much is written in the respective national languages (especially at Masters Level, some journals) and is thus not accessible to outsiders. Fortunately, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, Scandinavians are much more used to publishing larger works (from doctoral theses upwards) in English than, say, Germans.

Seen from this angle, such a compilation is welcome. It is based on the presentations to a working group ("history of Third World countries") within the 19th Congress of Nordic Historians held at Odense, Denmark, in 1984. A special effort was made to translate them into English.

The book is organized in three chapters: Africa, Asia, Latin America, each of them subdivided into two parts: four reports, by each of the four countries, on the state of research, and two to three papers on most diverse subjects. This country approach leaves it to the reader to put together, in an additional effort, what has been written in Scandinavia on a specific country in Asia etc. or on a specific topic. Happily, this effort is limited but rewarding.

It cannot be the objective of this short review to give a detailed account of the specific themes covered in Scandinavian research on the history of developing countries. In fact, the range is astonishingly broad, from the "Batavia trade via Copenhagen" to "Korea in Mongolian sources". By the way, to demarcate history from neighbouring disciplines is not an easy task.

At one point, the effort towards completeness went a bit too far, e.g. on p. 87: "For some reason, Professor S. opted not even to mention ... his own contributions ...". Where else does one encounter such expressions of modesty in the scientific world?

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JÜRGEN RÜLAND (ed.): *Urban Government and Development in Asia. Readings in Subnational Development.* (Materialien zu Entwicklung und Politik, 33). München/Köln/London: Weltforum Verlag, 1988. 270 pages, DM 49.-

Urban government research in developing (Asian) countries, the topic of this book, is directly related to the general problem of – uneven – spatial (regional) development within a country – a specific feature of most of these countries. The obstacles towards achieving a more "balanced regional development" are manifold; in their interlinkages these obstacles become a real dilemma:

- the so-called population "explosion" in Third World countries took place first and foremost in the metropolitan cities with the consequence that in the year 2000 each fifth inhabitant will live in a metropolis!
- even more relevant is the functional concentration of all main institutions and activities in the metropolitan cities. Bangkok Metropolitan Region constitutes 15% of the population (1985) but it generates 44,2% of the GDP, resulting in a per capita income that is more than three times higher than the national average. With respect to reducing this metropolitan-rural dichotomy these phenomena become crucial
- highly centralized political systems still exist in almost all of these countries. Furthermore, the central (national) governments are localized precisely in these metropolitan cities (or capitals in smaller countries). The effects of these interlinkages are again manifold:
- the infrastructural, economic and political advantages of the metropolitan (and capital) cities are the major factors attracting the bulk of economic investments to the metropolitan regions (for Thailand see Table 8, p. 89) and
- the neglected and thus stagnant regional centers (not only the rural areas!) are mostly unable to create development generating ("spread") effects, with the result that
- the development gap in many of these countries between the metropolitan region and almost all of the rest of the country grows even wider; i.e. spatially a center-periphery structure becomes more and more a reality.

Planners, politicians as well as scientists all agree that the lower-order urban settlements, i.e. rural service centers, market towns, secondary and intermediate cities (> 100.000 pop.) obviously have a key role to play in reducing this gap. More precisely: rural development includes the need for strengthening all these centers down to the small ones.

But what is the real potential of these secondary cities? That is one of the major question behind this book. The preconditions to play this role in "sub-national development" are unfavorable in the vast majority of cases:

1. a general lack of financial resources
2. doubts regarding the willingness of the central government to really counterbalance the one-sided development, and
3. uncertainty as to which strategy is the most practicable to overcome these disparities.

This point is picked up by the editor himself in his introduction "A Critical Review of Theoretical Approaches to Urban Government in Southeast Asia" (pp. 12-53). He deplores the fact that small towns and intermediate cities play an important role, yet they "remain the least studied and perhaps least understood elements within national and regional urban systems" (p. 4). He rightly points out that "more systematic comparative research would not only help to refine the methodology of cross-urban and cross-national data gathering, but also be an important step towards theory-building." (p. 6-7). The article provides a detailed review of various theoretical approaches used in local government research.

Comparative studies of local government performance of 5 intermediate cities in each of three Southeast Asian countries – Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines – are given in the second article "Urban Government and Development in Southeast Asian Regional Cities. Issues and Problems in Dispersing Urban Growth" (pp. 54-121). The reviewer welcomes the fact that practical problems are also discussed here, including the severe financial constraints these cities are faced with. Despite substantial annual revenue increases even comparatively "rich" cities like Ipoh and Petaling Jaya (Malaysia) reached a per capita income of only three to four percent of that of intermediate cities in the FRG; that of the surveyed Philippine cities amounted to even less than 1% (Table 2). The detailed analysis of the revenue structure also reveals "that fiscal autonomy of Southeast Asian regional cities is weakened by a declining trend of locally-levied revenues and an increasing dependence on central government grants" (p. 61). The chapter concludes with a strategy to strengthen local government in these cities (esp. Table 6, p. 107). This contribution, based on extensive empirical research between 1984 and 1987, undoubtedly forms the centre piece of the whole volume.

The third chapter is an attempt to provide an overview of "Patterns of Physical and Institutional Development in Asian Cities" (pp. 122-166) exemplified by 7 metropolitan and 5 intermediate cities of the region. The descriptive article provides a lot of information, without, however, giving the data sources. – The subject of chapter four is the examination of "Municipal Councils in Peninsular Malaysia after Restructuring: Issues and Problems" (pp. 167-186). In his critical article the author deals with 9 Malaysian intermediate cities. He comes to the conclusion that the "attempt to give new significance to local government, and in particular to Municipal Councils in Peninsular Malaysia, has demonstrably failed. The expectation that once the municipalities had been restructured they would be able to contribute positively towards the achievement of national objectives has not been realized" (p. 184). – In the fifth chapter the "General Supervision of Philippine Cities:

Limits and Opportunities for Local Autonomy" (pp. 187-208) is discussed. It includes a historical survey of central-local government relations from the Spanish regime (1571-1896) up to the "Revolutionary Government" of 1986 (pp. 188-191). The author concludes that during all this time "the central government maintained a very strong control and influence over cities" (p. 188). This lack of local autonomy is caused first and foremost by the President's strong supervisory powers over local governments laid down in the Philippine Constitutions of 1935, 1973 and 1986. The author therefore expresses his doubts as to whether, under these circumstances, the cities can play any substantial role in national development.

The last two papers are more or less case studies focussing, however, on important topics. The article on "Urban Environmental Problems: A New Challenge to Local Governments in Malaysia. The Case of Penang Island" (pp. 209-236) proves that the sensitivity to environmental problems has its repercussions in the developing world. Unfortunately, reality reveals that practical actions to protect and improve the environment are rarely carried out rigorously, partly due to the fact that municipalities are not yet adequately equipped to cope with these challenges. – The last article on "Urban Planning in an Indian Intermediate City: Trichur's Experience with Plot Reconstitution" (pp. 237-268) deals with inner-urban planning problems resp. techniques – also an aspect of subnational development.

The demand to counterbalance metropolitan dominance in order to achieve a "subnational development" (unfortunately this central term is not clearly defined here!) is one thing, but reality is often quite different. The necessity to achieve a "balanced regional development", to cite a significant example, was already stressed in the All-India Second Five-Year Plan (1956-1961). Despite remarkable efforts from the central and state governments, however, the regional imbalances have still not been reduced. It is the merit of this volume to pinpoint a highly important reason resp. obstacle, namely the lack of local autonomy of cities as crystallization points of development, with the consequence that "subnational development" is so very difficult to realize in practice.

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