

There are only two circumstances which may make it difficult to use the book: the lack of an index (most regrettable in view of the many details treated in the text and notes of this study) and an unusual transcription of the Burmese names (with few exceptions). Although the "Prague Method Romanization of Burmese", which Bečka was evidently forced to follow, is surely closer to the actual Burmese pronunciation than the usual English transcription, someone who is not a specialist on Burma might have difficulty identifying "Mólămyáin" as the town of Moulmein, "Cjis" as the name "Chit", or "Shwéitigóum" as the famous Shwedagon Pagoda (fortunately, not all transcriptions are so confusing). In spite of these two points, the reviewer has no hesitation in regarding Bečka's book as the standard work on this period, which laid the foundations for the creation of an independent Burmese state in 1948.

*Klaus Fleischmann*

**Kernal Singh Sandhu/Paul Wheatley (eds.):** *Melaka: The Transformation of a Malay Capital c. 1400 - 1980.* Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press (issued under the auspices of The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore), 1983. Volume 1: XXIX, 816 pages; volume 2: XXIX, 784 pages. Singapore \$ 350.

This book focusses on Melaka (Malacca), once a major urban center in the Southeast Asian island world and nowadays a small town mainly of touristic attraction. Fifty one social scientists from the ASEAN countries, Europe, the U.S.A. and Australia cooperated to produce this book which describes and explains the course of development of this famous place. The result is a landmark of scholarship in the field of Southeast Asian studies. It is to be praised for the wealth of data and interpretive insights contained in its 1630 pages covering two big, hardback volumes.

Favourably located on the Straits of Malacca the harbour town of Melaka emerged in the fifteenth century as the dominant link connecting the emporia trade between China, Java and the other Southeast Asian islands on the one hand with the seaborne trade from Europe, the Near East and India on the other. Melaka's rise to prominence was partly due to its favourable location and partly to the Islamic nature of its trading community, attracting Muslim merchants from India, the Arab World and the Southeast Asian hinterland. When the Portuguese conquered the town in 1511 the Islamic traders were eager to redirect trade to other ports in the archipelago. In accordance Melaka diminished in economic importance, but no single alternative center could assume its former role as the leading

entrepot in the region. Hence the Southeast Asian trading network disintegrated. For Melaka, the Portuguese conquest marks the beginning of a gradual decline in importance during the next centuries. Competition and varying success of the dominant political powers in the area -- the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British, the Japanese, and the Malay sultanate in former times -- had repercussions in the economic sphere which were deeply felt in a trading center like Melaka and eventually led to its decline.

The work under review attempts a multifaceted and multidisciplinary view of this process from c. 1400 until the present. The 48 contributions do not limit the analysis to the city walls of Melaka. Justly so the larger Southeast Asian environment is taken into account as regional background to local conditions. Reading the book, however, one would welcome more information on the world economic context -- developments in Europe, India, China, the Arab World -- which shaped local and regional developments in Melaka. Nevertheless, given the focus of the book, one cannot blame the contributors for not providing details on the global system in which Melaka and its surroundings were embedded. Fortunately, with its 'global' Braudelian outlook K.N. Chaudhuri's recent book ("Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean", Cambridge 1985) supplements the background necessary for the assessment of the macrocontext into which the transformation of Melaka fits as a well-documented local and regional case.

In this short review I cannot pay due regard to each paper in this voluminous work. Instead I will outline the contents of the two volumes. This should indicate the breadth of topics covered in this major work on the (once) important Malay capital. Section I ("Introduction") outlines the historical and ecological context of Melaka. In section II ("Melaka in History") several chapters treat the course of development and selected events from the past of Melaka. Section III ("The Territory of Melaka") is devoted to the hinterland, the agrarian economy and locational hierarchy within the region. Section IV ("Melaka Town") describes features of the town itself -- the port, the architecture, business life and living conditions from a mainly geographical point of view. Starting with volume 2, section V ("Ethnic Diversity in Melaka") contains an ethnographically rich presentation of the dominant ethnic groups living in the town: Malays, Indians, Chinese, and Eurasians. The discussion incorporates intraethnic variability as well as data on interethnic relations. The chapters in the more heterogeneous section VI ("The Modernization of Melaka") investigate the political history and development programmes in the town and its surroundings. Section VI "An Interpretive Summary" by the editors, integrates the various findings. I would like to refer the reader to this paper as a useful starting point (in addition to the editorial chapter on "The Historical Context" in section I). Appendices include a selection of historical maps, prints and drawings; a bibliography and an index conclude vo-



lume 2. To the detailed bibliography on Melaka one entry should definitely be added: the book under review itself. I guess it will soon become the most important single source on the history, economy, social anthropology and geography of Melaka. Generally the papers are of good, sometimes excellent quality. They are well-argued and well-documented. Furthermore, numerous tables, figures, plates and maps make it a joy to browse through the two volumes and to start reading. Of course, the high quality printing has its price which only better-funded libraries will be able to afford. Overall, one should not expect one major new hypothesis emerging from a work containing so many diverse contributions. As far as possible in a multidisciplinary effort, however, there is order and integration in the organization of papers within the section and in the data presented. The unique value of this magnum opus lies in its detailed documentation of the multifaceted nature of development for one particular case. The main message for Southeast Asianists contained in this book is methodological: one should pay due regard to local as well as regional opportunities and constraints when analyzing the formation of Southeast Asian cultures. A case study like this is uniquely suited for an assessment of both kinds of forces.

*Thomas Schweizer*

**Friedrich W. Fuhs:** *Agrarverfassung und Agrarentwicklung in Thailand.* (Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung, 82). Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1985. XVIII, 311 pages, 24 graphs, 96 tables, DM 60.-

The "Introduction" depicts briefly the general historical background of the development of modern Thailand, whilst the succeeding four chapters concentrate on the political and economic framework, the natural conditions of agricultural production, the systems and institutions of agriculture itself, and the agricultural development in the main sectors since – roughly – the beginning of this century. Analysis is primarily based on official statistics interpreted with the sure eye and ample experience of an observer familiar with Thailand's agricultural problems for many years. All the more surprising are the few and very short recommendations given in chapter 5 ("Outlook"); but broader future perspectives were probably wisely withheld, thus making the whole book a clear-headed empirical (instead of a more or less passionate political) study.

Nonetheless, there are many useful hints for readers who tend to neglect the functional reasons for social changes unfamiliar to "Western" eyes, – as, for instance, the statement that abolition of statute-labour in the 19th century had to be followed by huge monetary investments, thus paving the way for private capital-