

JONATHAN RIGG, *Southeast Asia. The Human Landscape of Modernization and Development*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, 2nd ed. 2002. XXVI, 326 pages, several maps, figures, diagrams and photos. £ 14.99, ISBN 0-415-13921-X (pb) / £ 45.00, ISBN 0-415-13920-1 (hb)

This remarkable book closes a gap in the perception and analysis of recent development achievements and problems in Southeast Asia, combining, as it does, different perspectives: a modern "regional geography of development, and a regionally-rooted development geography" (p. xx), foreign and endogenous ideas of development as well as perspectives from urban, cultural, economic and political sciences. The author makes clear that and to what extent modernization and development in Southeast Asia take place in different places, at a different pace, through different actors and decisions – adding: "although unfashionable in many quarters of the academic community" (p. 286) and: "The tendency is to see development (as modernization) itself as the problem, rather than as a solution to the problem of under-development" (p. 286). He underlines that in distinction to scientific communities in other parts of the world, Southeast Asia "is notably lacking in truly indigenous, radical visions of development and modernization" (p. 65). Against this developmental background the book concentrates in four parts on "Southeast Asian development: the conceptual landscape of dissent", "Marginal people and marginal lives: the 'excluded'", "Change and interaction in the rural and urban worlds" and – bringing together the three previous parts: "Chasing the wind: modernization and development in Southeast Asia".

In the first part the different assessments of the so-called "Asian Miracle" are discussed, the question of different notions of concepts like "development" or "sustainability" within different cultural settings is raised and various ideas of "alternative development" (including approaches like the "Asian Way", p. 59–63) are compared – laying substantial ground for multi-perspective perceptions and explanations in the following chapters. The statement "It is the synthesis of the imported with the local, the overlaying of the indigenous with the exogenous, that creativity – and originality – has occurred" (p. 66) summarizes to what extent recent developments in Southeast Asia need to be understood from a comparative, multi-dimensional perspective.

The second part of the book takes a close look at aspects of geographical exclusion, rural-urban disparities as well as uneven development. Addressing the problem of identifying poverty and categorizing the poor, the author – while giving many examples from his own wide field experiences – underlines the necessity of understanding the situations from within: "The poor (as well as the middle and rich) set their own standards of poverty, deprivation or exclusion – creating, in the process, emic poverty 'lines' or wealth rankings" (p. 112). As regards "exclusion", for instance, he pleads for a thorough analysis and understanding of contexts and meanings: "Exclusion is often used in an all-embracing way to highlight the mal-effects of modernization. Yet when it comes to

specifics, the word loses its usefulness. ... It categorizes people and fails to explore adequately the ways in which people struggle against, and resist, such depictions" (p. 148). Similar considerations have to be taken into account with many other phenomena of change in Southeast Asia.

Rural-urban dynamics, i.e. interaction, modernization and transformation processes, are focused in in the third part: Here the tremendous changes in agriculture, the rural villages, industrial performance and urban functions as well as rural-urban interactions and dependencies are questioned. While stressing: "The notion that there are distinct and separate worlds ... is shown to be deeply flawed as more and more people, and with greater frequency, cross the 'divide' between the two" (p. 153), the author gives several proofs in this chapter for the summary that "the process of 'change' – one is chary to use the terms 'modernization' or 'development' – which is not just complex in time and space, but also subject to multiple interpretations given different cultural and ideological backdrops." (p. 154).

Part four brings together the major ideas of the three previous parts, while looking more closely to the winners and losers in the "landscape of modernization and impoverishment" (p. 279) in Southeast Asia.

Apart from valuable "unfashionable" perceptions and remarks – which set the unique concept – the book offers a highly readable mixture of facts, background information, statements and conclusions, enriched by a plethora of useful material (maps, diagrams, tables and inset boxes) and well-chosen references.

Frauke Kraas

MAHA SILA VIRAVONG, *Prinz Phetsarat – ein Leben für Laos. "Eine Biographie von Chao Maha Uparat Phetsarat" und "Die Geschichte des 12. Oktober 1945"*. Übersetzt aus dem Laotischen und herausgegeben von Volker Grabowsky. (Periplus-Texte 4). Münster: Lit Verlag, 2003. xxi, 179 pages, illustrations, € 20.90. ISBN 3-8258-6492-8

Prince Phetsarat (1893–1959) was one of the great historical personalities of the 20th century in Southeast Asia. As vice-king of Luang Prabang he was paramount in the struggle for independence of his motherland Laos. Therefore, Prince Phetsarat – also known as the "Iron Prince" – is admired in the whole of Laos as the father of the Laotian nation. To date, half a century after his death, Laotians wear amulets with his portrait. This tradition is comparable to the Thai custom of wearing amulets with King Chulalongkorn's portrait. For the Lao, Prince Phetsarat has a historical significance similar to that of King Chulalongkorn, the builder of modern Thailand, for the Thai.

Though historians do not question Prince Phetsarat's role in the Lao struggle for independence and his importance as the "father of Lao nationalism", little is known about the person and life of Prince Phetsarat. The only biography