

personalities have so far been honoured with such a monument: King Setthathirat (1548–1573), King Surinyavongsa (1633–1690), and King Chao Anou (1804–1828), the first two symbolizing the glory of Laos, and the last named the struggle of the Lao people against Siamese hegemony.

The translator and editor of the book, Volker Grabowsky, is Professor of Southeast Asian history at the University of Münster. He has worked as senior lecturer for Lao language and literature at the National University of Laos. His recent research focuses on the history of the Tai peoples in Southeast Asia and southern China.

The translation of both works of Viravong provides us with an important source which, hopefully, will enhance the further study of the recent history of Laos. Besides this, Grabowsky's introduction to the book is a valuable contribution to a better understanding of the biography of Prince Phetsarat and the story of the declaration of independence in the context not only of Laotian history, but of Southeast Asian history as well. A large appendix of personal and place names, given both in Laotian and Latin script, as well as a bibliography, index, maps and historical photographs round off the book.

Jana Rändchen

KEES VAN DIJK, *A Country in Despair. Indonesia between 1997 and 2000*. (Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, 186). Leiden: KITLV Press, 2001. 396 pages, € 31.80, ISBN 90-6718-160-9 (pb)

As the fourth most populous country in the world Indonesia is one of the potential heavyweights in international relations, especially because it is also the country with the largest Muslim population. It is this international context that makes the *reformasi* era, i.e. the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule since the step-down of President Suharto in 1998, an important topic not only for the country and its immediate neighbours. In this era, many fundamental decisions were made in a great number of fields, such as politics, economics, religious affairs, and culture at large, that will be of lasting influence. This is why it is foreseeable that the *reformasi* period will be seen in the future as one of the classic points of reference for Indonesian area studies as well as for a number of other disciplines.

Kees van Dijk's book has all the prerequisites for becoming one of the standard works of this period for a variety of these approaches. The reason is simple: Since the book follows a descriptive approach, it is similar to a chronicle or a diary covering this turbulent period week by week. Based on extensive research of Indonesian-language material, especially from the print and internet media, the book provides the reader with a detailed summary of what happened when, who did what, and who said what to whom. Excellent indexes and other

appendices at the end of the book offer additional aid in extracting precisely the information required by a specialized reader.

Since Kees van Dijk does not refer to any theoretical framework, the reader should be aware that the decision to include one piece of information and omit another is informed by a good portion of common sense. This common-sensical approach in van Dijk's collection of Indonesia's important *reformasi* era, is, however, not as arbitrary as it might seem. Rather, it reflects the main themes of Indonesian public discourse as well as the research agenda of Dutch and international scholarship during that period. One should especially bear in mind that Kees van Dijk, as Professor at the University of Leiden and Senior Researcher at the Royal Institute for Linguistic and Anthropological Research of the Netherlands (KITLV), participated in many important conferences and workshops on *reformasi* topics organized by the Dutch academia. Thus, typical conference topics in this context, such as elections, violence, economic and political crisis, the investigation of recent sins, corruption and Suharto's wealth, as well as mysterious killings, are all covered in great detail in separate chapters. The time frame spans the election campaign of May 1997 to the beginning of the end of Abdurrahman Wahid's presidency in 2000/2001.

It is quite clear that a different, theoretical approach, for instance a feminist or post-modern reading as is popular in the US, might lead to a different rendition of the *reformasi* era. However, even supporters of such approaches might acknowledge that Kees van Dijk's contribution is a valuable, well-researched and solid work for them as well. In the multi-polar world of academic discourse, such an acknowledgement would be due recognition of the energy and diligence invested by Kees van Dijk in this project.

Arndt Graf

BRUNHILD STAIGER / STEFAN FRIEDRICH / HANS-WILM SCHÜTTE (Hrsg.),
Das große China-Lexikon. Darmstadt: Primus Verlag (Wissenschaftliche
 Buchgesellschaft), 2003. 994 Seiten, zahlreiche Abbildungen und Ta-
 bellen, € 128,-. ISBN 3-89678-462-5

Fundierte Informationen sind die Grundlage für effektives Arbeiten. Das neue China-Lexikon liefert diese Informationen. Es ersetzt das vor dreißig Jahren erschienene China-Handbuch, welches in vieler Hinsicht veraltet war. Der bewährte Aufbau des Buches ist beibehalten worden: Eine systematische Übersicht der Beiträge, gegliedert nach den gleichen 12 Rubriken, ermöglicht eine schnelle themenspezifische Recherche, das umfassende Personen- und Sachregister dient der Stichwortsuche. 441 Artikel liefern einen Überblick über nahezu alle erdenklichen Facetten der wirtschaftlichen, politischen, kulturellen und sozialen Entwicklung Chinas von der Mitte des 19. Jhds. bis heute. Die Einträge erläutern grundlegende Themen wie das politische System, Geographie, Bevölkerungspolitik, Gesundheitswesen, Pressewesen sowie auswärtige Beziehungen,