

die burmesische Kultur wieder und sind verwoben mit der Erzählung über die achtzehntägige Fahrt durch das Land (z. B. 58, 66f.).

Gleichzeitig gewährt die Autorin Einblicke in die politische Geschichte des Landes, das Leben unter einer Militärdiktatur, den Zerfall des Sozialismus, den Beginn der Marktwirtschaft in den 1990er Jahren, die ständige Präsenz von Militärpolizei, auch in Zivil, und die unzähligen Regeln, die auf eine einzige reduziert werden kann: „Lebt artig im Rahmen der gesetzlichen Bestimmungen“ (176). Politische Probleme werden lediglich angedeutet und sind nur für diejenigen wahrnehmbar, die zwischen den Zeilen lesen können oder mit der Situation in Myanmar vertraut sind. Es ist burmesische Art, vorsichtig zu sprechen, zumal über politische Dinge.

Doch über Politik zu sprechen, war auch gar nicht Absicht dieses Buches, geht es hier ja schließlich um eine Pilgerreise durch ein Land mit unzähligen Tempeln und Buddhastatuen. Und genauso gefangen genommen wie die Autorin von den vielfältigen Eindrücken auf ihrer Reise, werden Leserin und Leser gefangen genommen von ihrem Buch. Auch nach mehrfachem Lesen ist immer wieder Neues und Interessantes zu entdecken.

*Rotraut Wurst*

ALEXANDER HORSTMANN, *Class, Culture and Space. The Construction and Shaping of Communal Space in South Thailand*. (Culture and Social Practice). Bielefeld: transcript, 2002. XIV, 175 pages, € 31,40. ISBN 3-933127-51-3

Southern Thailand recently received world-wide attention after radical Muslim groups attacked government buildings. The clashes between them and the Thai army led to many casualties and refuelled the long latent tensions in the region. While Thai Buddhists constitute a large segment of the population, Muslims form the majority in Southern Thailand. The Muslim population is historically and ethnically linked with their co-religionists in the neighboring country of Malaysia. The cultural differences and similarities between the Muslim and the Buddhist population in Southern Thailand is the topic of Alexander Horstmann's study, which was recently published in Bielefeld.

Horstmann uses a social-anthropological approach to research the daily life situation of the two different societies. Based on 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork in the towns of Songkhla and Pattani in Southern Thailand in 1995/96, he provides an overview of the local actors and their daily actions in the communal space. However, his main focus is the perceptions, living conditions and moral value systems of the two communities. Horstmann investigates how the two major ethnic and religious communities in Southern Thailand use social and cultural resources in local, national and – in the case of the Muslim community – transnational networks in their struggle for cultural distinction. He

describes the everyday life, and the non-violent coexistence – at least during the period of research – of the secularized adherents of Theravada Buddhism and the more pious Muslims as well as their cultural specifications in this region. However, the cultural differences and negative perceptions of the other community may well foreshadow negative developments. The study focuses on the educated middle class, for according to the author this group is easier to access and ultimately more important for the future of co-existence than the local elites and the mass of rural farmers.

The study is divided into three “border stories”. The first of these stories introduces the social structure of the region, the changes to this structure over the years and the biographies of the members of the local middle class, who are more cosmopolitan and creating new identities and boundaries. In so doing, they are dissociating themselves from “the cultural others”. Additionally, Horstmann describes the middle class as a whole as consumers in South Thailand society. He focuses on their lifestyles, arguing that their behavior is used to communicate loyalty and identification with regard to their own societal group.

The second “border story” describes the Thai Buddhist and the Islamic middle classes and their respective organizations, practices and intellectual leaders on the local level. According to Horstmann, the Muslim community in Thailand finds itself in an identity crisis caused by its perceived marginalization. As a result, the Muslim middle class has formed a new identity, combining influences from other Islamic societies including Malaysia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The new media such as the internet, satellite television etc., helped in this process, forming a transnational collective Muslim identity by transporting the religious and cultural content to all the members of the community. The cultural identity of the Buddhist community is also shaped by the media and cultural values transported from Central Thailand.

The third point of research are the different forms of local politics, which are based on cultural and moral factors. On the one hand, the Muslim community has prejudices against the – perceived – immoral lifestyle of the Buddhist community concerning alcohol consumption, extramarital sexual relations and family values. The Buddhist community, on the other hand, sees the Muslims as not truly patriotic Thai citizens, influenced by external forces, and with a backward and anti-modernist way of life.

In conclusion, Alexander Horstmann provides a very useful insight into the thoughts, perceptions and activities of ordinary people in Southern Thailand. As a social anthropologist, he describes the local background and communal space in this unique part of the world. As the literature on Southern Thailand is very limited, the book is a welcome source of information about the cultural and societal situation in this region. The study can be recommended to readers interested in detailed regional information about Southern Thailand.

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