

analyzes how the *hua khanaen*, the vote canvassers, use vote buying and how their methods have become even more criminal over the last years. Powerful godfathers dominate officials in the provinces and sometimes they even force governors to resign in times of power struggles. In the year 1996, 4 billion US-dollars were spent for vote buying. Daniel Arghiros illustrates precisely how the election campaign of a *kamnan*, a local politician, was conducted in the central plain. For instance, identity cards are bought before the election to prevent the owners from voting. The role of a business association of brick manufacturers which supports political campaigns is also presented. In Yoko Ueda's contribution the links between provincial politicians, in this case business men of Chinese origin from Korat, and politicians in Bangkok are described. The reader is informed how these business men started and extended their economic activities. Business and politics in Khon Kaen in the northeast is the topic of Kevin Hewison and Maniemay Thongyou. Young successful business men have been interviewed to show their attitude towards local politics. Michael J. Montesano describes the rise of Chinese business men in different provinces and their political ties. The last chapter by James P. Logerfo deals with the events of the bloody May in 1992 and the role of the middle class. Certain segments of the so-called middle class like lawyers, teachers and academics helped to topple the military while the business-oriented segments kept a low profile. Indeed, most of the victims came from the lower class. But it must be stated that the protest movement in the provinces had a middle class leadership and contributed considerably to the interference of the king and the resignation of the generals. Not only Bangkok but the provinces as well stood up for democracy.

The publication can be highly recommended – thanks to the field studies the reader is provided with a vivid picture of the development of corruption and abuse of power in the provinces which have become an important feature of Thai politics. All contributors are well known researchers of Thai politics and society. Until the end of the eighties political power was concentrated in Bangkok. The local godfathers hovered in the background. Now their importance is rising. The tragedy is that, with its liberal constitution of 1997, Thailand is on the road to democracy. Yet money dominates politics more than ever before.

Roland Platz

SISOUPHANTHONG BOUNTHAVY / CHRISTIAN TAILLARD, *Atlas of Laos: Spatial Structures of the Economic and Social Development of the Lao People's Democratic Republic*. Copenhagen/Chiang Mai: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS)/Silkworm Books, 2000. 160 pages, 279 maps, £ 19.99. ISBN 87-87062-87-9 (NIAS), ISBN 974-7551-41-1 (Silkworm)

Few reliable data are available for Laos, the only land-locked country in South-east Asia. The number of solid scholarly pieces of work on Lao history, culture and society is still limited. The Atlas of Laos under review helps to narrow the

gap of our knowledge of this country. It is the outcome of a joint project undertaken by a team of geographers and social scientists from Laos and France led by Bounthavy Sisouphanthong (National Statistical Centre, State Planning Committee of Lao P.D.R.) and Christian Taillard (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique). The excellent cartography has been designed by Souphab Kouangvichit (National University of Laos).

Most of the data used in this atlas have been collected from the national census of population and housing, conducted in 1995 by a joint team of demographers from Laos and Sweden. This was the first census in Laos that met international standards. The census data were supplemented by statistics from various Lao state agencies, such as the State Planning Committee, the National Tourism Authority and some ministries (Agriculture, Education, etc.), as well as from the Asian Development Bank and other international organisations. "With the aid of computerised statistical cartography, which makes it possible to update the maps as soon as new data are available, this atlas studies the integration of these three regions into the national territory. It also analyses the new position occupied by Lao PDR in the reorganisation of continental South-East Asia and in a rapidly changing world" (p. 5). Some maps were even taken from sources that used remote sensing or a Geographical Information System (GIS).

The basis of this small-scale cartography are the 133 districts (*müang*) that constitute the administrative divisions of the country. Geopolitical considerations have led to a redefinition in three major regions: the North (along the Luang Prabang-Udomxay-Luang Namtha axis with access to the southwestern Chinese province of Yunnan), the Centre (converging along the Vientiane-Xam Neua axis as part of the "international axis" linking Bangkok to Hanoi), and the South (connecting the Mekong valley with the South China Sea). This division of Laos into three parts is not without implications as Xam Neua is officially regarded by the Vientiane government as part of the Centre while the status of Savannakhet, the country's second largest province, seems to be pending between the Centre and the South.

Numerous synthetic maps, combining a large number of the variables mapped in the atlas, reflect the territorial structures and dynamics characterising each sector of the country's economic and social life. The atlas is divided into ten chapters each of which contains up to three dozen maps and a well-written analysis of the respective data:

1.) Territory (29 maps), 2.) Settlement (33 maps), 3.) Population dynamics, (26 maps), 4.) Level of education, activity and employment (34 maps), 5.) Agriculture (38 maps), 6.) Industry, mining and energy (35 maps), 7.) Transport, post and telecommunications (24 maps), 8.) Trade and tourism (23 maps), 9.) Education, health and culture (27 maps), 10.) Spatial organisation (10 maps).

This structure is justified, all important aspects of Lao society and economy are covered. The authors limit their data exclusively to the modern period. Due to the lack of any reliable data prior to 1985 (the year of the first national cen-

sus in Laos), the mapping of social dynamics containing historical depth, such as migration flows, can only indicate very recent changes, i.e. during the 1985–1995 period.

It would go too far to mention all the fascinating, and very often quite original, maps. The mapping of population structure and population dynamics is without doubt one of the gems of this atlas of Laos. The potentially most challenging section in the entire volume is chapter 10 as it puts modern Laos into a wider regional perspective. For example, the map showing the historical development of communication routes “from the caravan trails to the new transportation axes of the peninsula” (p. 153) is most interesting. Likewise excellent is the model of the spatial dynamics of Lao PDR (p. 157).

A few shortcomings include two historical maps (p. 151), notably the map showing the Kingdom of Lan Xang “organised into three territories and one principality, maintaining close ties with two northern confederations” (i.e. Sipsông Panna and Sipsông Chuthai). This map shows the northern Thai polity of Lan Na (present-day northern Thailand) as one single kingdom. However, by the beginning of the 18th century, i.e. at the time when Lan Xang had broken into three separate kingdoms, Lan Na was no longer a unified entity either, but had disintegrated into various smaller autonomous polities each under Burmese suzerainty.

The Atlas of Laos is a masterpiece of Lao-French scholarship, its usefulness for students of modern Laos – geographers, social scientists, development experts, and people from other disciplines – is immense.

Volker Grabowsky

MARTIN STUART-FOX, *Historical Dictionary of Laos*, 2nd edition. (Asian/Oceanian Historical Dictionaries Series, 35), Lanham/London: Scarecrow Press, 2001. LXII, 527 pages, 14 maps, \$ 75.00. ISBN 0-8108-3880-X

This is a completely revised and enlarged edition of the *Historical Dictionary of Laos* by Martin Stuart-Fox, compiled in collaboration with Mary Kooyman, published more than a decade ago. The second edition indeed marks a significant improvement as the author was able to draw on the results of his own intensive research on Lao history in recent years. The volume contains hundreds of entries reaching from “(colonial) administration” to “Zhenla” (name of an ancient Khmer kingdom whose centre was presumably in present-day southern Laos) and covering a wide range of topics. The very detailed bibliography contains a short essay on the state of the art of historical writings on Laos. Useful information on the genealogy of Lao kings, the composition of colonial and post-colonial (royal as well as revolutionary) Lao governments, and demographic data are listed in the appendices. Stuart-Fox’s *Historical Dictionary of Laos* is exceptionally meticulous and accurate for the post-1953 period on which the author’s *original* research has focussed so far.