

me, were trained to be sceptical of ethnographies, like those by the French scholars of the colonial era, in which cultural description is overly static — outside of time and uncontested. Davis is aware of these issues. He even states that he originally aimed at seeing how funeral practices changed following the Pol Pot period, but he did not find such change. He speculates that the reaction to social upheaval may have even been to entrench traditional practices more deeply. What he describes is thus not an active process of change. He likewise demonstrates an awareness of variability in ritual practices, such as the distinction important to Bizot and other scholars between modernizing “reformed” practices and types of practices that modernizers reject. However, the overall focus of Davis’s book is not on how practices are contested. Rather, we see in large part a unified system. We are thus left wondering whether another scholar might have produced something different and less neatly unified.

Each chapter ends with a more subjective section describing anecdotally the author’s interactions during fieldwork. These sections introduce a literary element into the book and underline the ways in which Davis experienced the here and now of Cambodian death practices. For some readers these will be the book’s best parts. However, I was uncomfortable with them and often strained to see how they related to the chapters in which Davis included them.

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The Political Economy of Schooling in Cambodia: Issues of Quality and Equity. Edited by Yuto Kitamura, D. Brent Edwards Jr., Chhinh Sitha, and James H. Williams. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. xii+245 pp.

I can still see Cambodia and its educational and social issues so vividly after having gone through every page of *The Political Economy*

of Schooling in Cambodia: Issues of Quality and Equity, recently published in Palgrave Macmillan's International and Development Education Series. This most comprehensive book on schooling and education in Cambodia is long overdue, despite the huge amount of attention paid to the country and its traumatic modern history. The book is a valuable contribution to the fields of international and development education and of international and comparative education. It sheds more light on one of the poorest countries in the world, one that, since the 1990s, has at the same time also received significant aid from major international organizations, governments, and NGOs.

The volume consists of twelve chapters divided into six parts, each of which plays a distinctive role. Part 1 — the Introduction — sets the scene and tone for the book, while two chapters in part 2 offer more detailed historical, social, political and economic background on Cambodia and explain the aims of the book. Part 3 features three chapters focusing on schools in Cambodia, in which issues of pedagogy, shadow education, and equity and diversity in inclusive education are examined. Such examinations bring to the surface various concerns of quality, equity and social justice in Cambodian society. The issue of dropouts or early school-leavers in Cambodian schools, as demonstrated in two chapters in part 4, has persisted over the past several decades and even grown worse in some contexts. It is one of the most challenging problems that all parties involved in education, schooling and development in Cambodia have to deal with. The chapters, as such, investigate several fundamental factors underlying and leading to this issue to help understand why this has been the case. Specifically, chapter 7 examines the relationships between early school-leavers and students' gender and their parents' educational expectations. Chapter 8, informed by its labour-intensive data collection methods and bulk of data, reveals the complexity involving the transition to, and dropouts from, primary to lower secondary in Cambodia.

The subsequent three chapters in part 5 offer a good introduction to Cambodia's higher education and review the sector's expansion and quality improvement as well as its quality of education and

research. Chapter 10 pays specific attention to teachers and the teaching profession in higher education and investigates teacher training institutions responsible for teacher preparation in the nation. The final chapter in part 6, in echoing and reiterating the main points addressed in the previous chapters, proposes implications and recommendations for Cambodia's future education reforms.

Like most other volumes in the area of international and development education, this edited volume presents very detailed material about a specific country. However, what it has done significantly better than most such volumes is to take into thorough consideration various major factors and issues, and to put them in perspective. It has also engaged with key issues of equity and quality, while providing readers with varied ways to understand these concepts and the underlying debates within highly complex contexts across Cambodia's education, schooling and development domains.

If offering descriptions about a national educational context is a significant part of many titles in the areas of international and development education and of comparative and international education, this volume on Cambodia has moved beyond that, offering more analyses, conceptualizations, discussions, critiques and layers of complexity. Cambodia's persisting and emerging problems in education are identified, called into question, analysed, discussed, compared and contrasted with a good degree of rigour and depth, and in a range of perspectives. This very aspect of the book sets it apart.

More to its credit, this volume also impresses me with the significant amount of data presented and the varied research approaches and conceptual frameworks adopted by the contributors. It is also evident that all the authors have worked together on major projects and/or in different parts of a longitudinal project designed to study Cambodia's schooling and education. Therefore, there is a sense of coherence in terms of conceptualizations, research and methodology, a strength that one does not often see in edited books.

To recap, this volume has moved beyond the business-as-usual practice of providing descriptions of an educational system. Major issues of quality and equity in Cambodia's education, schooling

and development are addressed and discussed from varied angles and are informed by different theoretical frameworks and diverse methodologies. The concepts of quality and equity are not only explored in concrete terms but also in complex terms that offer readers space to come up with their own understanding, assessment and engagement with Cambodia. Decades have passed, much work has been done, many resources have been dedicated to Cambodia's education, and yet issues of quality and equity still seem to be a huge concern.

Closing the book, I find myself more curious about how education reforms in Cambodia could move forward in the coming years, given the profound multilayered challenges and problems that are present. The volume has succeeded in laying out this multifaceted scenario, while also having left readers with recommendations and solutions concerning the obstacles and difficulties identified and discussed by the authors. For those familiar with Cambodia, those new to Cambodia studies, those interested in area studies, and those wanting to learn about a specific educational national context, this volume is a good reference. In other words, it has travelled beyond the sphere of education and development. A thoroughly good read!

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Opposing the Rule of Law: How Myanmar's Courts Make Law and Order. By Nick Cheesman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 338 pp.

Opposing the Rule of Law is an empirically rich and thoughtfully written book. It is highly relevant to scholars and practitioners interested in the past and present of Myanmar, where ethnic conflict, land grabs, corruption, police abuse of power and other rule-of-law