

fourth comparative case study would only lend further credence and weight to Henley's argument. Instead, Henley is remiss for its exclusion.

In spite of the book's minor faults, Henley makes an undeniably compelling case with his congruent and rational argument for the primacy of rural and pro-poor development, its precedence over industrialization, and ultimately, its instrumentalism in sustaining economic growth in Southeast Asia, which set it on a development path that has remained a suitable benchmark for African development. As Henley does not exhibit a propensity to rely extensively on quantitative data and statistical analyses, the book does not demand prior knowledge in general economics. Consequently, it is an accessible read for a wide audience ranging from students of development studies to industry practitioners in the development field, or anyone with a mild interest in seeking an alternative explanation for the contradistinction in development trajectories between Asia and Africa.

REFERENCE

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GERARD D. WONG

ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute,
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace, Singapore 119614
email: gerard_wong@iseas.edu.sg

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***Cultures of Development: Vietnam, Brazil and the Unsung Vanguard of Prosperity.* By Jonathan Warren.** New York, NY: Routledge, 2017. Pp. 140.

Most research in development studies leaves culture at the margins, observes Jonathan Warren

in *Cultures of Development*. Where the significance of culture for developmental outcomes is acknowledged, it tends to be relegated to a black box. This under-conceptualization of culture's influence is especially notable in policy-oriented research. Critical development scholars, on the other hand, give attention directly to the ways developmental projects fail to anticipate how ideas and cultural practices may transform interventions. These scholars, though, resist commenting on the positive ways that culture can be used and refrain from making any policy prescriptions. Warren thus points to a hole in development thinking: while there are vague notions that culture shapes development, as well as a body of work offering culture-sensitive critiques of development projects, there is today little discussion of the ways that culture might be harnessed for collective developmental purposes.

The book sets out to make an initial contribution in this area through comparisons between Brazil and Vietnam. Warren makes it clear that his field of expertise is Brazil, and that he is a more recent arrival to the study of Vietnam. This background means he presents Vietnam through his knowledge of Brazil, just as he reflects back on Brazil in light of what he observes in Vietnam. To Southeast Asianists, this perspective should be fresh.

Vietnam is presented as a country with a more successful record of development compared with Brazil. This starting point may be peculiar given that Brazil's per capita income still towers over Vietnam's. Nonetheless, Warren points to the positives in the Southeast Asian nation's recent improvements in economic and social development, while growth and social progress has, on the whole, been disappointing in the last few decades in the South American country.

The association of poorer Vietnam with development and wealthier Brazil with stagnation may be further excused because Warren's aim is not to account for different levels of development. Rather, he seeks to find specific linkages between cultural factors and developmental logics. The main theme here, and the subject of core chapters, relates to how people think about external models of development. These models have to do with

governance or with economic institutions. Warren introduces a distinction between two types of thinking. In one view, external models are held up as ideal and, when efforts to implement them are unsuccessful, blame is placed on local factors. This thinking leads to frustration with people at home. In a second view, the cause of any poor fit between models and practice is ascribed to the models themselves rather than to local conditions. Confident in their own society's traditions and resilience, actors adapt or "indigenize" models to local conditions. The latter view, argues Warren, holds more promise for development.

The first view is found in Brazil, especially among the elite. That country's elite, aspiring to emulate the West, find themselves frustrated by the habits of their lower class compatriots. Their complacency or lawlessness impedes development programmes, maintain the elite. In the Brazilian context, this class snobbery is overlain with a strong dose of racism as class and racial distinctions are far from cross-cutting. In Warren's diagnosis, this elite culture erects barriers to inclusive social development plans and makes the state copy or "monocrop" foreign economic institutions with disappointing results. The situation contrasts with Vietnam, where Warren finds greater solidarity among people. Proud of their own traditions, people from all backgrounds can agree that development programmes ought to be altered to fit local conditions. Tradition is not something that stands in the way of modernization; rather, it holds developmental potential which needs to be unlocked. This pride and solidarity, Warren claims, is crucial to making Vietnamese elites interested in investing in society's future. Their Brazilian counterparts, by contrast, merely criticize. This logic is found both in discussions of public policy areas like health and education (Ch. 2) and in efforts to build economic institutions (Ch. 3).

These distinctions that Warren draws represent the book's most valuable conceptual contributions. In fact, the binary of blaming local conditions versus adapting external models could be further developed. These categories resonate strongly with ideas from postcolonial studies and could be grounded more explicitly in such work. An

understated theme of the book is the linking of such ideas to positivist and policy-oriented development studies. What Warren finds in Brazil might be labelled a form of "self-orientalism" or, more accurately perhaps, an orientalist attitude among an elite towards other members of that society. Restating his central claim, one could say he observes that this type of attitude varies across societies and suggests that this variation has direct implications for development policy.

The policy implication of *Cultures of Development*, which is spelled out in Chapter 5, follows logically from the analysis. Development practitioners should give serious consideration to "cultural work" which fosters solidarity among different segments of society and pride in collective identity. Warren offers a local case study from Brazil. In this case, a team of ethnographers helped to build pride in local identity, while education programmes created new forms of inclusive associations. Such initiatives made people committed to the collective future of the community. This commitment underpinned the regional government's success in improving social development.

The reader may wonder whether divergent levels and types of inequality in Vietnam and Brazil may lay behind the distinct attitudes documented by Warren. In multicultural Brazil, with a history of deeply unequal economic relations, the elitist bent may be unsurprising. Vietnam's revolution and different ethnic landscape may be a basis for solidarity. Warren addresses these possibilities (e.g., pp. 52–55) and sets them aside perhaps too quickly. Nonetheless, the book's strength lies in stressing that the two types of cultures are distinct and can shape policy. The historical basis to this distinction may be important, which may imply that culture becomes more of an "intervening variable" rather than an independent force. Even so, Warren's key point is that while history cannot be changed, ideas can. For the purposes of understanding development choices and for proposing policy options, taking these cultural ideas seriously is a promising starting point.

This book is good for stimulating thinking about culture-development linkages. Development

specialists should find the ideas provocative and relevant well beyond the two countries discussed. Assigning a portion of the book in an undergraduate course on development may be helpful for exposing students to nuanced cultural arguments.

ERIK MOBRAND

*Graduate School of International Studies,
Seoul National University,
Building 140-1, Room 513, 1 Gwanak-ro,
Gwanak-gu, Seoul 08826, Republic of Korea
email: erikmbrand@snu.ac.kr*

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***Unequal Thailand: Aspects of Income, Wealth and Power.* Edited by Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker.** Singapore: NUS Press, 2015. Pp. 208.

Inequality is a much-debated and controversial issue in the social sciences. Academic and public discourse on inequality is usually confined to advanced economies and rarely includes the developing world, despite rising inequality in economies such as China, India, or Southeast Asia. This volume, dedicated to inequality in the case of Thailand, is the first comprehensive study of its kind. The book highlights that the repeated political crises and coups d'état in Thailand are rooted in inequalities. Thanks to the quality and multifaceted contributions, this edited volume will surely become a key reference book for students of Thailand and of inequality.

Phongpaichit and Baker's introduction presents their analysis of how economic inequalities underpin inequalities of power, social positions and access to resources. Using extensive time series data (1962–2015), they show that income inequality has worsened sharply during the development era. Thailand's inequality was one of the highest level in the world when it peaked in 1992. The authors point to several political-economic factors to explain this rising trend

in contrast with neighbouring countries. For example, while rising inequality in Thailand is due to the benign neglect of authorities, in Malaysia, the government targeted inequalities after the riots of 1969 by implementing a policy of positive discrimination in favour of the Malays, which also provided it a source of durable political legitimacy. It was only in the 2000s that the Thai government enacted a set of policies, including its universal healthcare scheme, that income inequality declined (though nonetheless remaining the highest in Southeast Asia). The remaining chapters look at different sources of inequality in Thailand.

In Chapter 2, Laowakul analyses the skewed distribution of wealth based on the analysis of household surveys and the distribution of landholding based on the first ever study of a database of the Land Department. She shows that the concentration of land owning is indeed very high. She attributes this to the under-supply of public goods and services. However, public money is lacking, not because Thailand is a poor country, but because of the low rate of taxation. She proposes a tax on wealth which would fall on relatively few people — given the very high concentration of resources — while generating much-needed public revenues for the supply of public goods.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to inequality in education and wages. Lathapipat highlights that overall progress in education has been accompanied by growing disparities in the access to tertiary education. Household income plays an even more important role in limiting continuation to the tertiary level. This explains the widening wage gap between those with secondary and tertiary education as well as between those receiving different standards of tertiary education. The author suggests that providing fair access to good-quality tertiary education will be key to reducing social inequality in the long run.

Chapter 4, authored by Achavanuntakul, Rakkiattiwong and Direkudomsak, examines how capital markets affects inequality. First, the stock exchange exacerbates the inequality between those who have access to stock exchange and those who
