

otherwise discussed. Contributions include that by Nora Annesley Taylor on the subject of art history in the region, Charles Keyes on how literature in translation offers insights into indigenous ethnography, and Henk M.J. Maier on comparative literature in Southeast Asian contexts.

The final section, "Diasporic Students and the Rebirth of Southeast Asian Studies in the United States", is devoted to the rising role of diasporic students in the revival of Southeast Asian Studies in the United States. While this may appear of great interest to Americans, interesting connections are revealed between diasporic studies, with its many challenging takes on mainstream ideas, and area studies at large, especially Southeast Asian Studies. While Michael Salman talks about Southeast Asian Studies at UCLA and discusses the future of the subject, Vicente L. Rafael explores the connection between Southeast Asian Studies and Asian American Studies. Other contributions include those of Peter Zinoman who writes on Vietnamese Americans and Vietnamese Studies in America, Teri Shaffer Yamada who considers Southeast Asian American youth and the cultural misrepresentation of their heritage, and Tony Diller who ends the volume with "Heritage Learning of Southeast Asian Languages".

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***Civilizing the Margins: Southeast Asian Government Policies for the Development of Minorities.*** Edited by Christopher R. Duncan. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004. Softcover: 278pp.

This edited volume comprising a total of nine chapters examines local government policies in Southeast Asia, especially towards indigenous peoples. With the exception of Brunei and Singapore, the work examines all the other countries and therefore constitutes a good representative sampling of the region. The common themes that weave the book together are how regional governments have traditionally responded to indigenous minorities and how that may change over time. The emphasis is on the sort of policies undertaken, whether there is an attempt at assimilating or excluding such minorities within a broader conception of the state. As amply demonstrated by the contributors, there are

attempts at assimilation, although the underlying assumptions of policies are in the main negative — indigenous peoples are primitive and backward and in need of development to uplift their status in order to better merge with the majority ethno-cultural group. There is also the assumption that “certain levels of social development are intrinsically better” (Duncan, p. 3).

Other common strands uniting regional approaches include perceptions that minorities threaten state sovereignty. Consequently, many groups like the Hmong in Laos and the Moros in the Philippines have been associated with separatism and communism (Duncan, pp. 7–8). The classic attempt at the management of such minorities is government-initiated projects to classify and document these minorities and then subject them to civilizing projects in order to wean them away from their traditional means of agricultural and cultural production. There also appears to be a concerted attempt by governments to deprive such peoples of land tenure and land rights.

The first chapter begins with an assessment of Malaysian policies towards indigenous peoples in peninsular Malaysia. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs there regularly attempts to document indigenous peoples and then relocate them to new settlements. Such resettlements also include attempts to introduce cash crop agriculture and a more regularized and sedentary lifestyle. However, such attempts are typically problematic since the area allocated is often too small and the income from cash crops insufficient to sustain the relocated communities (Endicott and Dentan, p. 43). Consequently many of the resettled indigenous peoples return to their previous lifestyles in order to make ends meet. Another major problem with government policies appears to be attempts at religious conversions of these peoples into Islam. The authors argue that indigenous peoples are especially wary of circumcision and dietary restrictions that accompany religious conversion (*ibid.*, p. 47). In conclusion, the authors posit that government attempts at bringing the indigenous peoples into mainstream Malay society have only led to greater differentiation or the rigidification of cultural boundaries between the communities.

In the Philippines, the lot of the indigenous peoples appears to be much better — they have acquired significant political, economic and cultural concessions, and there are a large number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) assisting such peoples attain basic self-sufficiency (Eder and McKenna, p. 56). A major consideration for the Philippine government appears to be whether the Muslim Moros of Mindanao are in fact the same peoples as lowland Christians and whether they should be administered separately. An answer to this nagging question will in

turn determine if such peoples ought to be brought in line with the dominant national cultural norms (*ibid.*, p. 63). It is also pointed out that attempts at instituting regional autonomy have failed partly owing to the insufficient commitment of resources. A second and related difficulty is the failure of the 1996 peace agreement in bringing genuine peace to Mindanao since it excluded other Moro groups (*ibid.* pp. 76–77). Finally, the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States and renewed U.S.-Philippine military cooperation against Muslim insurgents in Mindanao appear to have converted a domestic issue into an international one.

The emphasis on national development and the policies pursued by the Soeharto-led New Order government have made it difficult for minority communities to avoid a measure of assimilation in Indonesia. The focus of this chapter is on the attempts by the Indonesian government to resettle indigenous peoples, especially those affected by commercial timber and mining concessions. There is also an attempt to examine some of the consequences of transmigration policies implemented by the government. The former are generally regarded as unsatisfactory and the latter somewhat more mixed. In the case of Madurese resettlement in Central and West Kalimantan, for example, there has been protracted violence between the resettled Madurese and the native Dayaks. Notwithstanding the problems facing indigenous communities in Indonesia, the author expresses optimism in the development of a more tolerant government, a freer and more critical press, the involvement of NGOs and the prospect of legal reforms as harbingers of more positive future developments (Duncan, p. 108).

In Thailand, whereas the state previously excluded upland ethnic minorities from development, recent policies have attempted to assimilate these minorities into mainstream development. The Thai state has associated upland peoples with three major problems confronting the state — security, narcotics and watershed destruction (Gillooly, p. 119). Since the 1970s, the management of highland peoples has been through narcotics control programmes funded by the United States and the United Nations. Since the onset of the Asian financial crisis in 1997, lowland communities have been much more aggressive in gaining control of forestry and water resources in areas inhabited by highland peoples. Additionally, there have also been accusations of indigenous complicity in the methamphetamine trade in the border areas with Myanmar (*ibid.*, p. 142).

In the case of Myanmar, the military junta currently in power has traditionally associated the highland areas as places of ethnic insurgency and terrorism, the cultivation of opium and the habitat of culturally

backward peoples. Indigenous peoples are also viewed as collaborators of foreign interests that seek to sow discord and destabilize the state. Hence, the Myanmar government is essentially hostile to the highland minorities and views them as a source of domestic political instability. Besides, their cultures are viewed as significantly different and deviant from those of mainstream Burman Buddhists (Lambrecht, p. 155). The Vietnamese situation is complicated not just by domestic developments but those related to regional conflicts as well. Hence, Chinese and Khmer minorities living in Vietnam face discrimination on the basis of broader regional developments (McElwee, p. 187). The state typically tries to assimilate minorities by breaking up longhouses and clans and through the abolition of customary practices like sacrifices that are regarded wasteful. Nonetheless, minorities who inhabit the midland and highland areas of Vietnam have constitutionally guaranteed rights and access to political activities.

Minorities in Laos are technically entitled to equal treatment according to the socialist ideology espoused by the state. The author, who focuses on the plight of the Hmong ethnic minority, notes that this group is often accused of opium cultivation, the destruction of forest lands and treasonous behaviour for fighting against the Pathet Lao and communists during the Vietnam War (Ovesen, pp. 230–31). In Cambodia, on the other hand, the fate of ethnic minorities has been determined by turbulent domestic political developments. The Vietnamese minority, in particular, has been subjected to bouts of xenophobic violence, especially during the reign of the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s. The discrimination against non-Khmer minorities, broadly classified as Chinese, Vietnamese and Chams, is now regarded as socio-cultural in nature since like the situation in Laos, there is little “constitutional discrimination”.

After having read the book, there remained the nagging question whether the authors sometimes confused minorities and indigenous peoples. The former is a statistical reference point whereas the latter is often a reference to some notion of original settlers. Arguably, from time to time, the two constructs overlay each other but it seems to the reviewer that there is an important distinction between the two. So, for example, if the concern was strictly with minorities, the authors should have studied the Chinese and Indian communities in Malaysia. The second question was whether the treatment of specific minorities could not have been better justified. After all, each of the countries examined have a number of such groups. Hence, there are choices to be made regarding which group is studied and which one ignored. Accordingly, better rationalizations of the choices made would have been helpful.

Regardless of these questions, this is an important work that will benefit social scientists working on Southeast Asia.

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***Thaksin: The Business of Politics in Thailand.* By Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker.** Chiangmai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2004. Softcover: 301pp.

Having had the misfortune of more than several dozen governments since the abolition of its absolute monarchy in December 1932, Thailand was for a long time seen as politically bumbling though economically stellar middle-income Southeast Asian nations, thus obscuring the significance of its current prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, to much of the rest of the world. It is fair to say that today Thaksin and his policies loom large over much of Southeast Asia's political and economic landscape largely as a result of his iron-fisted determination to mould Thai society with his mixture of populist policies and soft authoritarianism, while methodically fighting off any mild and harsh criticism from internal and as well as external critics. That his government has delivered rapid growth as well as political stability at home since he came to power seems to have blunted much of that criticism even though many of his critics are unwavering.

Has Thaksin's leadership played a significant role in catalysing intentional historical transformation in Thai institutions and social groups? Is his leadership a distinctive form of social influence insofar as he, Thaksin, affects the intrinsic and not just the extrinsic motivation of his followers? Are there other criteria, other than effectiveness, according to which Thaksin's leadership can be evaluated? These are the sort of issues around which more rigorous and more academic treatments of leadership are most often built. However, such an academically more in-depth biography is not what the authors have provided in what is without doubt a book intentionally targeted for a much wider mass-market audience.

Instead, in their newest book, Pasuk and Baker offer a very user-friendly and brilliant exegesis of the Thaksin phenomenon. Pasuk, who teaches economics at Chulalongkorn University, and Baker, who is an independent writer based in Bangkok, are also the co-authors of *Thailand: Economy and Politics, Thailand's Boom and Bust*, and