independence to 4.5 per cent today. The share of formal employment in the resource sector is only 7 per cent. Historically, there have been four periods of economic activity: the years 1975 to 1988 with slow but stable growth; 1989 to 2003 as a period of instability; the resource boom of 2004 to 2013; and an economic crisis from 2014 to 2019. The state's ability to generate revenue from resource production has been declining despite the resource boom, resulting in high current account deficits and relatively high levels of debt.

With respect to poverty and the population's standard of living, a positive dynamic can hardly be assumed for the past two decades. The analysis is based on demographic and household surveys from 1996, 2006 as well as 2016 to 2018. Although more households have water tanks, more children attend school and child mortality has decreased, the baselines for these improvements were at very low levels. The share of males without education has declined to 32 per cent, that of females to 40 per cent. Worsening governance, which has brought about poorer delivery of public services despite economic growth, is an area of regress. Moreover, the labour market and the status of women have hardly improved. The share of non-agricultural jobs has stagnated since 2006. It seems even more important that there is little sign of the structural transformation needed for sustained and successful development. The responsibility for this situation lies largely in the realm of politics. Polygamy has increased in PNG.

Chapter 7 in Part III outlines the distinctly uneven development in urban and rural areas and its consequences for livelihoods. Living standards prove to be hardly better in urban than in rural areas because costs are high and living conditions are difficult. People migrate from regions decoupled from development and with difficult environmental conditions to areas with resource projects that promise jobs. Whereas inequality has become exacerbated in PNG, the government has used the natural gas boom to upgrade the capital Port Moresby as a regional metropolis. The purchase of luxury Maserati cars on the occasion of the APEC meeting in 2018 is a prime example. The final chapter provides an overview of communication and the media. One-third of the population still has no access to mobile networks. Access to the internet is much worse.

In summary, the section of the book on the economy refers to a 1997 statement by geographer John Connell: "neither consistent growth nor sustainable development have been achieved" (12) since independence. Accordingly, the past 25 years have been lost for the country's development despite the resource boom and the economic growth based on it. Better conditions are hardly to be expected in the foreseeable future in light of the parliamentarians' decentralisation policy. The book is a compelling volume whose focus on politics, corruption, decentralisation, development paths, living standards, and uneven development are highly relevant not least in light of the coming 50th anniversary of independence in 2025. The partnership of the ANU Crawford School of Public Policy with the DevPolicy Blog and the UPNG School of Business and Public Policy, which has brought about an unprecedented rise in the number of participating researchers from the two countries as well as increasing publications, also deserves recognition.

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Jackson, Peter A.: Capitalism Magic Thailand. Modernity with Enchantment. Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 2022. 381 pp. ISBN 978-981-4951-09-8. Price: € 57,10

Classical varieties of modernization theory in the social and political sciences assumed that as a society becomes modern its religious institutions are subject to progressive privatization and decline. Over the past thirty years, this thesis with regard to modernity's "disenchantment" has been the subject of extensive critique and empirical refutation, including by sociologists like the late Peter L. Berger, who in his early career had been one of the leading formulators of the classical secularization model. Although today most sociologists and anthropologists of religion are keenly aware that religions across the world have "gone public" (to use Jose Casanova's phrase), unreformed secularization narratives continue to exercise a hegemonic influence in policy circles. Indeed, as Peter A. Jackson demonstrates in this theoretically savvy, engagingly written, and comprehensive account of religious change in late-modern Thailand, secularization viewpoints remain the default perspective in many political studies of contemporary Thailand.

Jackson is an emeritus professor of Thai history at the Australian National University. He has long been regarded as one of the most prolific and original analysts of religion, politics, and sexuality in this richly complex Southeast Asian country. In this new book, he draws on his own years of research into Buddhist reformism and popular cults of prosperity under the circumstances of neoliberal capitalism to present what he describes as "a corrective to the dominance of Buddhism in many histories and political studies of modern Thailand" (15). Jackson rightly notes that, "Western religious studies has at times taken the colonial-era construct of Buddhism as being equivalent to Thai religion as a sociological fact" (32). One reason Western scholars subscribe to this reductionist view is that, during the early decades of its development, the discipline of religious studies in the Western academy adopted a monotheistic and Abrahamic approach to the category of religion. The latter prioritized canonical texts as well

as "belief and teachings" (26) over ritual and magical practice. This approach "constituted a hindrance to understanding fields of belief and ritual in Thailand that are multiple, polytheistic and practice-oriented rather than based on expressions of faith in holy texts" (133).

As Jackson demonstrates, another reason for this essentializing characterization of Thai religion had to do with the modernizing ambitions of the Thai state. Threatened by Western imperial advances, Thailand's rulers introduced "modernist state projects ... based on essentialist constructs of 'Thai culture,' 'Thai religion,' 'the Thai nation,' and 'the Thai people." These campaigns simultaneously presented Thailand as a Buddhist nation while also working "to suppress local identities, cultures and languages as well as to critique magical religiosity" (14). Whatever the state's homogenizing ambitions, both popular and elite religiosities failed to conform to this "Buddhacization" (161) ambition. Although some among the clerical and national elite subscribed to the Buddhism-based standardization, even the Thai court continued to sponsor rites that extolled courtly power and charisma. The latter included rites in which Brahminic priests perform rituals to Hindu deities now "encompassed within the Buddhist cosmology as guardians of the Buddha" (161).

No less significant, although the modernist state promoted a doctrine-oriented "religion" (*sasana*) that aimed to standardize official Buddhism, "spirit cults were largely left out of the state project of harnessing religion to the projects of ... civilization, modernization and development" (111). Rather than atrophying, popular spirit cults of health, wealth, and good fortune have flourished. They have developed some of their most florid expressions in response to Thailand's capitalist boom, and in conjunction with the expansion of new social media. A few decades ago, many analysts had assumed that Thai Buddhism would respond to the country's capitalist expansion by developing a Buddhist equivalent to Weber's Protestant ethic. Some Buddhist reformists of modernist inclination did adopt a purified Buddhism of just such a disposition. However, Jackson shows, "[i]n recent decades …[the] influence and impact [of such reform movements] on Thai religious life has considerably declined" (9), even as astrology, magical amulets, and spirit cults have boomed.

Another quality that makes this book so intriguing and important is that the author links his analysis of the religious field in Thailand to a broader reflection on the condition of modernity. He draws particularly extensively on Bruno Latour's 1993 critique of narrowly Weberian models of modernity – and particularly, I would add, models derived from the post-war American sociologist Talcott Parsons, who (in my view) erased some of the most interesting of Weber's reflection on modern religion. Jackson cites Latour to argue that, rather than conforming to a uniform process of rationalization, modernity is "fractured between rationalizing purification and hybridizing practice" (5). In other words, "ideological rationalization" is but one part of modernity's process; the modern age has also witnessed myriad examples of "ritual-based enchantment" (4).In Thailand's religious arena, Jackson notes, state-based religious reformists have priorit

ized religious rationalization in some spheres, while tolerating – or even joining in – prosperity-oriented spirit cults. The latter are not at all the preserve of the marginal and precarious classes. "Thailand's middle classes and elites draw on popular religion to empower and enrich themselves" (17). Thailand's privileged classes engage in these activities, Jackson notes, in a manner that "is rarely concerned with the West and does not have an anti-Western political or ideological agenda" (83). They do so instead "to draw upon the efficacy of ritual in order to gain advantageous positioning within the local form of capitalist modernity that has emerged in Thailand" (83).

In summarizing the dynamics of the broader religious field in Thailand, Jackson introduces several distinctions that will be of interest to researchers working in other parts of the world. He explains that Thai religiosity is premised, not on monotheist univalence, but a "polyontologism" that mixes rituals and beliefs from varied ethico-religious currents (Buddhism, Hinduism, spirit cults, astrology, etc.) without trying to render them doctrinally consistent. The resulting "amalgam," he observes, differs from the widely used notion of "hybridity," because contradictions and incommensurability across the varied elements are not eliminated but preserved. To the degree that a synthesis of elements occurs at all, it "takes place at the level of ritual and practice without discursive rationalization" (144). In public commentaries, "the hierarchical dominance of Buddhism" is affirmed. But ritual practice shows a high degree of "tolerance of ambiguity, incommensurability and contradiction" (33).

Jackson recognizes that the polyontological and discursively inchoate nature of the religious field in Thailand is not by any means generalizable to other nations or civilizational traditions. He comments, for example, that in nearby Indonesia Muslim reformists have made clear that polyontology is heresy, and believers must commit themselves to the "purification or extermination of ambiguity" (148). The point of his study is not to suggest that the Thai case should be taken as a prototype for modern religious change generally but to follow Shmuel Eisenstadt's counsel on modernity as multiple (66f.).

Theoretically rich but also engagingly written, this is a book that should be read by all scholars of religion and politics in Southeast Asia. Its theoretical breadth

and dazzling depth of insight also make it a book that should be read by anyone interested in the comparative study of religions in modern times.

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Kingfisher, Catherine: Collaborative Happiness. Building the Good Life in Urban Cohousing Communities. New York: Berghahn Books, 2022. 242 pp. ISBN 978-1-80073-239-1. (Life Course, Culture and Aging; Global Transformations, 8) Price: $ 135,00

Cohousing affords important insights into encounters of the individual with larger social collectivities and hence can be seen as venues of new approaches to the good life. As Junko, one of the residents portrayed in the book put it, "We are not friends and not family, but something different, something new" (143).

Kingfisher's compelling ethnography engages the reader from page one as it offers a comparative analysis of a cohousing community in Japan and Canada and uses it as a starting point to reflect about well-being, with a special focus on loneliness and isolation as an increasing feature in contemporary societies. Kingfisher takes the reader on an absorbing journey rich with ethnographic details. The book starts with an introduction about how urban cohousing communities can expand how we think about well-being. It then provides a chapter outlining the two key field sites of this study, Kankanmori and Quayside Village, two cohousing communities. Chapters 2 and 3 contain elaborate ethnographies of the two communities, with numerous lively episodes of residents that constitute the highlights of this book in this reviewer's opinion. Vignettes from the daily lives of residents vividly illustrate that life in cohousing communities is a permanently changing process. They also show that individuals work together to establish the good life collaboratively – a process that can be fraught with difficulties. Chapter 4 portrays the exchanges taking place in the communities and most intriguingly, between the two field sites as some of the residents had the chance to visit the other cohousing community for ten days respectively, with the author being present during both exchanges. This unique angle highlights cultural specificities in how individuals share houses in both countries, but also illustrates common features. For example, one finding was that common meals in both cohousing units resemble one another. Yet, the Canadian residents argue that the way common meals are organized in Kankanmori is much more regimented than in their own unit, with stricter rules of meal preparation (153). Individual narratives help us to understand how residents of the shared housing envisage ideal living and well-being. Since some parts of the study consist of highly engaging conversations between residents in the units, the reader gets the feeling of being temporarily a part of the cohousing world. The book ends with a conclusion dissecting policies of well-being, arguing that cohousing constitutes a way to "challenge the narrow focus on individual selves characteristic of contemporary society" (185). In this reviewer's opinion, one of the great strengths of this book is the perfect balance between quotidian episodes from the ground with more abstract theoretical reflections.

Interestingly, some of the residents portrayed have experienced considerable changes with regards to their work and lifestyle values as they initially worked long hours in corporate employment, but gradually cut down their working hours and eventually contributing more to the cohousing community. In other words, sharing accommodation with others made some individuals rethink their lifestyles, thus improving their work-life-balance in the process. These cases show the potential of shared living as residents of Kankanmori and Quayside Village "work to build the good life *collaboratively*" (208). Ultimately, individual well-being, collective happiness and the well-being of the planet are all intricately related. This process of residents building the good life together is shown to be enriching both from the diversity point of view as some residents observe that they would not have engaged with others outside of the shared house as well as from the perspective of environmental sustainability since residents share resources, tools, and skills. Drawing on Ruth Levitas' understanding of utopia as method, this intriguing study cogently shows how cohousing projects constitute powerful attempts to live in a holistic way that reflects on the "connections between economic, social, existential and ecological processes in an integrated way" (Levitas, Utopia as Method. The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society. New York 2013: 18). In the conclusion, Kingfisher poignantly observes: "As practical utopias, urban cohousing communities are always already imperfect and unfinished; and yet they are also always reflexive and always striving, representing one attempt, simultaneously critical and hopeful, imaginary and practical, fantastical and realistic, to collaboratively move more in the direction of a happy, good life" (208).

An appendix containing four film shorts shot mostly by residents by the two sharehouses is accessible online, which greatly enriches the empirical data presented in this book.

Caitlin Meagher's recent ethnography of Japanese sharehouses (Inside a Japanese Sharehouse. Dreams and Realities. Milton Park 2020) with its close focus on the complex social relations in cohousing units and the tension between the desire for and resistance to social change makes for excellent complementary reading to Kingfisher's work.

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