

the superb storytelling skills of the author. Students will love the book, and professors will find it a useful addition to texts for courses on peoples and cultures of Southeast Asia or ethnographic field research.

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Counting the Costs: Economic Growth and Environmental Change in Thailand.
Edited by JONATHAN RIGG. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1995. xxi, 267 pp. \$36.50 (paper).

Thailand has enjoyed record economic growth over the past two decades. It has been dubbed one of Asia's economic "tigers." Yet such growth has not been without cost. A growing income disparity between rich and poor shows that the fruits of "development" are distributed highly unequally. As environmental degradation has become ubiquitous in the country, questions have also been raised as to the ecological merits of this process. There is growing doubt today as to the social and environmental viability of Thailand's "growth-first" development model.

Counting the Costs explores this darker side of the Thai economic "miracle." A product of the Fifth International Thai Studies Conference held in London in 1993, the volume reflects a common recognition by the contributors that human-environment interaction in Thailand has recently undergone a "fundamental shift" (p. 19). Befitting the complex issues involved, the contributors hold different views about the nature of Thailand's environmental crisis. Hence, those looking for a list of policy recommendations as to the resolution of this crisis will be disappointed. Yet, this would be to mistake the intent and utility of this collection, for, as the editor points out, "the value of the papers lies in their very disagreements" (p. 4). The messiness of Thailand's political ecology is in a way reflected in this book in the discordant views of contributors of different backgrounds and ideological persuasions.

A thought-provoking essay by Jonathan Rigg highlights some of the areas of disagreement. The effect is a refreshing one. Rather than the unity of views that editors often impose on collections of this kind, debate over Thailand's environmental crisis is allowed to flourish, thereby providing insights into broader arguments presently animating the Thai polity. This introduction also relates the book's Thai material to broader conceptual concerns, albeit not always as fully as one might have wished. Overall, the author ably sets the scene for the detailed empirical analyses that follow.

The theme of "learning from tradition" is first considered in two contrasting essays. Leslie Sponsel and Poranee Natadecha-Sponsel focus on Buddhism as the basis for an ecologically sustainable approach in Thailand. Blaming Western modernization for current ecological ills, they argue that Buddhism is a suitable source for an indigenous environmental ethics, as well as an actual mechanism for social change as illustrated by, say, monks' enactments of tree ordination ceremonies designed to save the forests. A useful essay, it would nonetheless have been stronger if it had taken a more critical stance on the politicized nature of Buddhism in Thai society, and how this situation may weaken the ability of Buddhism to serve as an alternative approach to environmental issues. If Buddhism is often portrayed as a 'sustainable' cultural tradition, shifting cultivation, as Dietrich Schmidt-Vogt makes plain in a study of northern Thai swiddeners, is usually condemned as an ecologically destructive tradition. Using case studies of the Lawa and Akha peoples, he shows the need for a

more nuanced approach to viewing the interplay between shifting cultivation and vegetation change.

Several contributors focus on the adverse impacts of development on the physical and social environments. Guy Trebuil explains how modern agriculture contributes to deforestation, water degradation, soil erosion and toxicity, and how greater attention is needed in the future to the concerns of small-scale farmers. Thomas Enters, meanwhile, considers the weaknesses of conventional economic analyses of complex environmental interactions. He provides data, by way of illustration, to refute the claim that shifting cultivators are altering hydrological regimes and increasing river sediment loads. Philip Dearden then relates “development” to social dislocation and reduced biodiversity in the highlands. He argues that development has led to social differentiation between and within tribes. This has, in turn, resulted in the collapse of communal resource regimes and in wildlife depletion. Helen Ross and Anuchat Pongsomlee usefully evaluate the social and environmental impact of urbanization in Bangkok. They use focus groups and surveys to explore the perceptions of urban residents about environmental problems linked to water pollution, traffic, and changes in urban land use. Environmental problems affect the poor disproportionately, as these residents are least able to protect themselves and also “gain the least from economic growth” (p. 148).

A fine essay by Timothy Forsyth considers whether environmental management linked to nonregulated tourism may serve as the basis for sustainable and equitable development in northern Thailand. Among other things, the author shows that it is better-off farmers—not their poorer counterparts as one might expect—who are most likely to participate in tourism since the former have the requisite cash and labor surpluses for such enterprise. Two rather superficial chapters by Churai Tapvong (on water pollution control) and Paul Bartlett and Joanna Baker-Rogers (on oil and gas exploration) then follow. While each essay addresses an important topic, the authors fail to address crucial political and economic questions. There is little sense of why government inaction over water pollution is the norm, or why oil and gas exploration in the Gulf of Thailand may be problematic socially or ecologically.

In contrast, an excellent chapter by Larry Lohmann on the politics of “environment” in Thailand shows how useful political-economic analysis can be. Using empirical examples, he argues that differences between poor Thai villagers and wealthy Westernized outsiders may be partly understood as an outcome of radically different “systems of thought.” Differences surrounding personality vs. impersonality, orality vs. literacy, and public vs. private use of “commons” are canvassed so as to show why conflicting understandings of “reality” are the norm, and why interaction between these systems of thought is inescapably power laden and conflict ridden. The final chapter by Philip Hirsch provides an overview of how Thai development may be related to a regional geopolitics in which Thai resource demands are leading to the replication of many of the social and ecological ills first experienced in Thailand in this country’s “less developed” neighbors. Yet the export of Thai-style environmentalism is also under way as groups such as the Project for Ecological Recovery fight this new Thai-centered regional political ecology.

Despite divergent views, most contributors to this volume share a common pessimism about the prospect for ecological recovery without systematic change in Thai political, economic, and cultural practices. The book thus provides a salutary warning to all those who believe that Thailand’s environmental crisis will inevitably

go away with rising affluence. It shows, above all, that such a crisis is inextricably linked to the very economic “miracle” that many outsiders applaud so uncritically.

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The Dynamics of Metropolitan Management in Southeast Asia. Edited by JURGEN RULAND. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1996. xv, 260 pp. \$39.90 (cloth); \$25.00 (paper).

The rapid growth of mega-urban regions in Southeast Asia has emerged as a major policy and research issue in the decade of the 1980s. This collection of essays arose out of an initiative of the late Kernal Singh Sandhu, the former Director of ISEAS who played a pivotal role in the “indigenization” of research on Southeast Asia in the last thirty years. The focus of this collection is both interdisciplinary and policy orientated. Apart from the excellent introductory overview essay by Ruland, the other essays are case studies of the individual cities of Bangkok, Hanoi, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Singapore and Yangon (Rangoon for anti-SLORC types). The editor encouraged his writers to utilize Geertz’s ideas of “thick description” of each city, focusing on “a precise description of the urban, political and management cultures” (p. 21).

While not a totally neglected theme (see Marc Askew and William S. Logan, *Cultural Identity and Urban Change in Southeast Asia: Interpretative Essays*. [Melbourne: Deaken University Press 1994]), the study of the emerging “cultures” of Southeast Asian cities is important and curiously harks back to the ideas raised by Hoselitz and by Redfield and Singer in the 1950s (see B. F. Hoselitz, “Generative and Parasitic Cities,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 3, no. 1 [1954/55]: 53–73; R. Redfield and M. B. Singer, “The Cultural Role of Cities,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 3, no. 1 [1954]: 274–94). Rudick’s concern, however, is much more with the nexus between management and power as they affect the efficient management of cities rather than broader concerns about the role of cities in economic growth that had motivated these earlier writers. But it also true that the role that cities may play in economic growth is centrally related to the efficiency of their management.

This collection of essays is potentially of considerable importance. The result, however, is somewhat uneven. Most of the authors take “thick description” to be a rather careful description of the political structure, fiscal basis, and management organization of the cities they are writing about. Most of the essays lack that Geertzian quality of style which is based upon rich ethnographic detail and an underlying assumption that cities are “locales of complexity.” This said, the content of the book is a valuable addition to the growing documentation of the management challenge of Southeast Asian cities. Most essays have a careful documentation of the historical emergence of metropolitan governance, the fiscal basis of each city’s operations, and a focus upon central challenges to the cities’ administrators. These challenges, while having common features, have been variously emphasized. Thus, the almost comic opera efforts of the Bangkok administration to resolve the fundamental dilemma that “road space covers only about 7 per cent of the city land area—compared to 25–30 per cent in Western cities” (p. 53) in a situation where 2–3 million vehicles are growing at 9 per cent per year are carefully described. The “political culture” of Hanoi