

Christopher R. Duncan, editor, *Civilizing the Margins, Southeast Asian Government Policies for the Development of Minorities*. Singapore, National University of Singapore Press, 2008, xx+284 pp., paperback, ISBN 978-9971-69-418-0.

*Civilizing the Margins* is a collection of papers that began as the panel 'Legislating Modernity among the Marginalized: Southeast Asian Government Programs for Developing Minority Ethnic Groups' at the American Anthropological Association meetings in 1998. In the process of putting the volume together some participants were unable to contribute and other authors were recruited to cover the national landscape (pp. *vii*). This edition is a reprint of the volume that was initially published by Cornell University Press in 2004. It includes all the original chapters as well as Duncan's new, brief introduction that updates information on government policies from 2004–2007 (pp. *ix-xx*) and a bibliography of recent publications on government policies and ethnic minorities in Southeast Asia (pp. 271–275).

In a review of limited length, it is not possible to provide detailed discussions of each chapter. Instead an overview of the topics and issues is presented. The chapters are well written and readable and the photographs are well chosen. The maps of the countries and regions discussed within the countries provide useful information and help orient readers who are not experts in Southeast Asia.

This volume's strength is its broad coverage of the region; it provides useful overviews for all the countries of Southeast Asia except Brunei, Timor Leste and Singapore (these get a brief mention in Duncan's new introduction). The volume begins with Duncan's general overview on modernity, development, government policies, and indigenous ethnic minorities and includes chapters on Malaysia (Endicott and Dentan); Philippines (Eder and McKenna); Indonesia (Duncan); Burma (Lambrecht); Viet Nam (McElwee); Laos (Ovesen); and Cambodia (Ovesen and Trankell).

The authors have set themselves the difficult task to provide both accounts of government policies and the ways in which the policies have affected particular peoples. All of the authors are anthropologists, except Lambrecht, who is a political scientist. Within the confines of a chapter limited to twenty-five or thirty pages, it is practically impossible to provide sufficient detail on both government policies and the ways in which they have been applied, and also provide meaningful ethnographic accounts of the how these policies have affected particular ethnic groups. One complicating factor for all these presentations is that there are many different minority peoples within each country. Authors had to choose between writing about particular peoples and illuminating the impact policies in this particular instance and lose any sense of the overall affects, or writing about the impact of these policies at such a

general level that they lose any sense of the variation in the consequences these policies actually have.

All the chapters provide accounts of government policies. Some focus on the ways in which these policies affect particular minorities: Duncan on the Forest Tobelo of Indonesia; Gillogly on Lisu in Thailand; and Ovesen on Hmong in Laos; while Ovesen and Trankell discuss three different minority groups in Cambodia, the Cham in some detail as well as briefer discussions of the Chinese and the upland groups. Others provide more detailed accounts of particular countries' policies and their histories and the ways in which they affect the minority groups in general; Endicott and Dentan on how Malay policies have affected the Orang Asli, the cover term for all of the indigenous peoples; Eder and McKenna on the Philippines and the divergent policies for indigenous cultural communities and Philippine Muslims; McElwee on indigenous minority groups in the highland areas of northern and central Vietnam; Lambrecht on Burma's border area development policies and how they serve to extend government control into the border region.

The balance depends on the authors and their interests and expertise as well as the situation in the particular countries being discussed. There is no one solution to this problem of balancing fine-grained understanding of government policies and the recognition of considerable ethnic diversity. Given that the nation state is the unit of analysis here, this tension is unavoidable. Con-

sequently there is some unevenness in the comparability of what is reported. However, it is a strength of the volume that the systematic discussion of government policies for 'civilizing the margins' lets us see regional patterns at the level of national governments.

Two themes stand out in all these chapters: resettlement and the environment. All of the governments have attempted to resettle indigenous ethnic minority peoples into more accessible areas and also resettle majority peoples into the ethnic minority areas. Regionally, all these governments have accepted the modernist view that permanent, orderly settlements are part of what it is to be civilized. Resettling majority peoples into minority areas provides 'civilized' role models for the minority peoples as well as relieving population pressure, notably in Indonesia, Philippines, and Viet Nam. The resettlement of majority populations also makes the area more productive, at least from the government's perspective. Neither sort of resettlement has been particularly successful. International and national concerns about the environment and environment degradation frame the indigenous ethnic minority peoples and their swidden agriculture as destroyers of nature and as threats to wildlife. And this in turn supports resettlement programmes. Although, as a number of the authors note, resettling majority peoples in the area does not help preserve the environment. Resettlement and the creation of forest reserves or protected areas makes it difficult for

the indigenous ethnic minority peoples to maintain their access to land and the other resources that they need for their lives and livelihood.

This volume's focus on government policies and the indigenous ethnic minority groups continues to reify the distinctions between populations. The separation of upland and lowland populations as two isolated and deeply different groups is a result of the same modernizing policies that came with colonization and continued into the independent modern nation states. Although the authors do discuss history, this tends to be limited to the nineteenth century with little awareness of the early relationships and interactions between governing centres and what have now come to be seen as isolated and marginal populations. This divide also tends to obscure the level of ethnic heterogeneity in what is taken to be the majority population. It also helps obscure the analysis of similar governmental civilizing and modernizing programs for the peasantry. Admittedly the indigenous ethnic minorities have the double handicap of being minorities and marginal. Nonetheless, the analytic separation of indigenous ethnic minorities from other groups continues to obscure the ways in which governments work to create national identities and control their populations.

Overall this book makes a valuable contribution to the study of the interaction of government policies, bureaucracies, bureaucrats, and various indigenous peoples. It provides a con-

cise and readable overview of the array of government policies for indigenous minority peoples in Southeast Asia. This coverage makes it useful for scholars of particular countries who want to place the particular policies and practices of their areas within the larger regional comparative framework. It is also accessible to people with little knowledge of Southeast Asia, making it useful for students interested in development and minority policies.

Nicola Tannenbaum