

Southeast Asia: The Human Landscape of Modernization and Development (2nd edition). By

JONATHAN RIGG

Routledge: London, 2003, 408 pp. £20.99 (pbk). ISBN 0 415 25640 2

As Jonathan Rigg notes in the preface to this second edition of *Southeast Asia*, the original edition first appeared in publication at the somewhat inopportune moment (for a book on Southeast Asian development) of the onset of the Asian economic crisis. Thus, this substantially revised (including approximately 60 further pages) edition, seeks to unpick both the prior economic 'miracle' as well as the 'crisis', and to explore the processes of subsequent adjustment and reform.

To recap, *Southeast Asia* examines the nature of modernization and development in this diverse and fascinating region. The book is structured in terms of three sections; conceptual understandings of Southeast Asian development, impacts of development with reference to economic and social marginalization and exclusion, and the interaction of the 'urban and rural worlds'.

In the light of the considerable implications of the impact of the economic crisis for wider development studies, Rigg's meticulous updating assessment of the material is especially useful. The particular qualities of the text have always been its eloquent synthesis of wide-ranging sources and careful review of their theoretical bases and predispositions. A whole series of synthesizing figures enhance the usefulness of the book for teaching purposes.

The economic crisis clearly led to serious questioning of the 'miracle' thesis of Southeast Asian development, and was indeed, viewed almost gleefully by some critics of the World Bank. However, in assessing the impacts of the crisis some seven or so years later it is notable that it certainly did not herald the kind of collapse which some critics had suggested. Probably the greatest impact of the crisis has been political, in leading to the fall of Suharto and the (perhaps surprisingly relatively smooth) onset of democratization in Indonesia. Indeed even Indonesia is now (belatedly) seeing a return to some kind of economic stability.

In writing a new edition relatively shortly after the first, an author is faced with the difficult task of balancing the inclusion of new material within the approximate bounds of the book's length. The updated tables and figures are especially useful in charting the trajectories of Southeast Asian countries' development.

The discussion of the ideological and theoretical factors shaping interpretations of the crisis is particularly useful and links well with the structuring of the original text. However, I personally would

have welcomed a rather more detailed examination of the origins of the crisis, for instance, with respect to such matters as the 'pegging' of Southeast Asian currencies, property inflation and 'cavalier' approaches to business/loan risk assessment. However, as Rigg notes, part of the difficulty in identifying core factors underlying the economic crisis is that there was not one crisis but rather a whole series of crises taking place in different forms in different Southeast Asian countries.

The key quality of the book continues to be the careful marshalling of evidence and theory to provide a well balanced appraisal of the overall (positive) impact of development in Southeast Asia. The strongest chapter (which has been further enhanced) is probably the final one which draws together the foregoing material to provide a sound and nuanced set of critiques of post-development thinking. In sum this book reflects many years of careful scholarship and committed engagement with the region, and, as befits a Southeast Asianist, a genuine and realistic appreciation of the ways in which development and modernization are appraised by the peoples of Southeast Asia.

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The Russian Far East: A Reference Guide for Conservation and Development (2nd Edition). By

JOSH NEWELL

Daniel & Daniel, McKinleyville, 2004, 466 pp. £54.50. ISBN 1 88028 476 6

This is a much revised edition of the 1996 publication: 'The Russian Far East: Forests, Biodiversity Hotspots, and Industrial Developments' which Newell co-wrote with Emma Wilson. This earlier publication, whilst characterized by the same general structure as the revised edition, focussed predominantly on the delineation of Biodiversity Hotspots within the majority of the Russian Far East's federal units. Both Newell and Wilson had been involved in the conceptual development of the 'hotspot' idea relative to the Russian Far East (RFE) through their work with Friends of the Earth – Japan in the early part of the 1990s. At a general level, these areas were understood as a function of biological rarity and anthropogenic threat. Furthermore, the presence of indigenous peoples was an additional feature incorporated into the underlying methodological framework. The identification of actual 'hotspots' was determined through discussion at a conference held in Vladivostok during 1995 which brought together a range of academics, practitioners and politicians from each of the RFE's federal regions. The 'hotspots' approach was thus designed to identify key areas for conservation in

order to facilitate the effective targeting of limited financial resources and enable the region to hook into international systems of conservation management. While a concern for addressing conservation and development issues remains of central importance, this second edition represents a substantial expansion relative to the 1996 publication in terms of both the nature and extent of the content.

The prime aim of the book is ' – to provide a source of information for interested parties ranging from practitioners to academics'. Newell goes on to state in the preface that he would 'like to think of the book as a kind of travel guide for the RFE development community' with the intention – 'to make the text as useful for the businessperson or World Bank official as for the scientist or environmentalist'. The structure of the book, with its regional approach and consistent engagement with a variety of underlying themes, ensures that it will appeal to a range of different end-users. Furthermore, the conscious engagement with critical academic literature and extensive footnoting provides a useful resource for more scholarly forays into the book's substantive themes. The book is divided into eleven main chapters (comprising 466 pages in addition to 53 maps, approximately 80 tables and figures, and a range of colour photographs).

The first chapter provides an overview of the Russian Far East while the remaining chapters explore each of the region's ten federal units in turn. Each chapter follows a similar pattern and covers main themes which include a general geographical/ecological background to the Republic/Krai/Oblast/Okrug in question, the identification and description of areas considered important for conservation reasons (biodiversity hotspots), a general overview of the economic situation, and a section concerned with the issue of sustainable development. Its consistency of format facilitates rapid extraction of data/information once the user is familiar with the layout. The appendices provide useful support to the text at various stages of the book. It should be noted that whereas the original 1996 edition included the work of 18 contributors, this edition draws on the expertise of over 90 specialists incorporating a wide range of practitioners and government employees engaged in a number of different fields. Furthermore, there is an admirable mixture of both Western and native Russian contributors.

As a comprehensive and informative synthesis of statistical and visual material, the book is a clear success. In order to reflect on the book's value in respect of more substantive issues and concerns, it is perhaps appropriate to start with its overall regional focus. The RFE accounts for a substantial percentage of the Russian Federation's land area (approximately 40%) and is a region that embodies

marked climatic and ecological diversity ranging from the arctic conditions of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in the north to the monsoon climate of the Amur basin in the south. The RFE is also characterized by extensive reserves of natural resources and minerals including fish and timber resources as well as coal, lead and precious metals such as gold. Its substantial hydrocarbon resources are likely to play an increasingly important role within Russia's energy production profile over the course of the next decade. During the Soviet period, the region functioned as a resource periphery helping to support the industrial and military might of the USSR. At the same time, Gorbachev had apparently intended to encourage the development of a more complex regional economy based on the expansion of local industrial processing capacities (e.g. see Rodgers, 1990). Such plans, however vague, were fundamentally undermined by the collapse of the USSR, an event which served to sever many of the region's linkages with the rest of the former empire and forced the RFE to look eastwards towards the expanding South-East Asian and Pacific-rim markets. The economic, social, political and environmental consequences of such a marked shift in the orientation of the region's economy forms the backdrop to the current book.

The combination of the region's considerable size, substantial natural resource endowment and comparative importance to the Russian domestic economy make it an important focus for study. The relatively limited critical engagement with the RFE within contemporary Western social science literature reinforces this conclusion. At the same time, this should not deflect attention away from the regionally-focussed work published by geographers, together with other social scientists, during the course of the last decade or so. This includes Bassin's (1999) historical account of Russia's expansion into the Far East during the mid-nineteenth century in addition to Bradshaw's examination of the RFE's hydrocarbon resources, particularly with respect to those lying off the coast of Sakhalin Oblast (e.g. Bradshaw, 2003). More generally, there has been a critical assessment of the region's potential to utilize its extensive natural resource base in order to underpin medium – to long-term growth (e.g. Bradshaw and Lynn, 1998; Bradshaw, 1999). Allied to this, scholars such as Wilson (2003) have carried out detailed ethnographic work in order to explore the conflict between ongoing development projects, changing political situations, and the local socio-environmental situation (see also the work of Crate, 2003; Fondahl and Sirina, 2003; among others).

Newell's book presents a useful addition to this literature with its emphasis on the friction between conservation and development goals. The notion of

sustainable development is employed in a general sense throughout the book in order to draw attention to this conflict. The narrative is particularly effective at highlighting the way in which the region has fallen back on its resource base during a period of social, political and economic uncertainty with limited opportunities to develop a more sophisticated industrial base. This dovetails, at least in part, with observations made in other former socialist countries (e.g. see Staddon's work on Bulgaria, 2001). More specifically, the book's detailed focus on natural resource sectors such as forestry and hydrocarbons helps to expose the potentially deleterious influence of foreign capital on the region's largely unregulated natural resource sector and connects with critiques in the more general development literature. Indeed, it is clear that the varied and complex nature of the region's societal issues coupled with the limited policy development and associated implementation capacity of local government infrastructure are undermining medium to long-term planning. Under such conditions, foreign assistance in areas of conservation and development takes on an added importance and meaning.

The regionally-based case studies detailed in the book are therefore effective in highlighting a range of intractable problems repeated across the RFE which promise to exercise a considerable influence over the nature of the region's medium, and long-term development. These include the ambiguities of local political activity, corruption within administrative and regulatory structures, weak regulation of economic activity, and the aforementioned involvement of foreign capital from countries such as China and South Korea as well as further afield. Newell's genuine concern for the integrity of the region's natural environment, grounded in his own extensive fieldwork during the course of the last decade, provides the main driving force behind the book. Furthermore, this concern has resulted in a publication that provides a much-needed focus on the development issues faced by a large, but oft overlooked, region of Russia.

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Political Ecology: a Critical Introduction. By PAUL ROBBINS
Blackwell, Oxford, 2004, 242 pp. £19.99 (pbk). ISBN 1 405 10266 7

I enjoyed reading this book. It is lucidly written and thoughtful and has two central aims. The first is to outline some of the key literature and debates over the term *political ecology* and fulfils the traditional role of a good, academic textbook. The second seeks to go beyond this to 'show political ecology as something people do' (p. xviii) as a form of active, political practice. The text uses detailed case studies to assess how and why debates over political ecology have changed and with what outcomes. The book's core argument is that these debates have become too polarized between social constructivists on the one hand and those who concentrate on environmental destruction on the other. In their place there should be more emphasis on 'the production of nature by human and non-human actors – and a broader examination of *all* producers of nature' (*ibid*). A weak form of actor-network theory is deployed as a way of enhancing knowledge on environmental change and environmental politics.

The book is divided into four parts concentrating on: what is political ecology?; conceptual and methodological challenges; the state of contemporary political ecology; and the direction of future agendas. Within these sections chapters are sub-divided with a structure provided in the introduction.

