

London, Bruce, **METROPOLIS AND NATION IN THAILAND: The Political Economy of Uneven Development** (Westview Press/Boulder, Colorado, 1980), 145 pp.

This book is a qualitative sociological analyses of the historical relationship between Bangkok, the primate city, and the other more rural provinces of Thailand. London hypothesizes that this relationship is characterized by the urban primacy of Bangkok which has been historically parasitic upon its hinterland, the Thai nation. Through a review of the literature on primate city dominance in other developing nations and a collection of relevant aggregate data, London concludes that Bangkok is one of the most parasitic primate cities.

The criteria employed in determining the extent of parasitism or "internal colonialism" are: (1) the phenomena of exploitive and/or neglectful policy making; (2) the intergroup power exchanges behind policy decisions; and (3) the role of intra-national politics. London attempts to operationalize these broad concepts to achieve greater precision and clarity in the examination and assessment of the impact of Bangkok upon the Thai nation. The reader is led through a series of operational definitions which are intended to support the theoretical framework for London's methodological alternative to the traditional demographic - ecological approach to "the parasitic effect hypothesis". Presumably, London's more scientific approach is based on a longitudinal analysis of the criteria described above (e.g., exploitive and/or neglectful policy-making) in which a rather unconventional interpretation of Thai political history is presented. This primarily chronological, one-country case study of Thailand is hardly an argument for a more scientific methodological alternative in view of the fact that a cross-cultural comparative study would lend more sophistication and validity to London's thesis. Curiously enough, London laments over S.K. Mehta's "re-evaluation" of primate cities because "the reader is left with the ambiguous assertion that little or no inference can be made regarding the parasitic impact of primate cities". London then leaves his readers with an equally ambiguous conclusion that "Bangkok has historically been parasitic throughout Thai history... although... it must be recognized that one can conclude nothing about the primate city from a case study of one primate city".

Unfortunately, the rather presumptuous pseudoscientific approach and exhausting critique of the literature on primate cities which characterize the first half of London's study reads more like a Ph.D. dissertation than a book. London also fails to cite important Thai sources as well as relevant contemporary sources in English (e.g., *Thai Peasant Social Structure*, by J. M. Potter, 1976; *Modern Thai Politics* by C. Neher, 1976; and *Wages and Economic Development with Special Reference to Thailand*, by P. Pongpaichit, 1971, etc.)

Apart from these weaknesses, London has critiqued numerous important secondary sources and presented them with a descriptive analysis in a comprehensive manner. The scholarship of the work is basically sound, and London does achieve one of his stated goals in suggesting alternative approaches to the examination of the study of primate city parasitism. London's analysis of the "transition" in Thai politics characterized by the events preceding, during and immediately after the October 1973 uprising, is a significant departure from conventional analyses. Moreover, London suggests that this "transition" marked an important shift in the "evolution from power elite to ruling class". While conclusive evidence for this premise is lacking, London does contribute to the understanding of contemporary Thai politics by directing attention to forces and factors which undermine the viability of the ideal-typical power elite thesis held by many scholars of Thai politics.

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