

# Book Review

*Land tenure, Conservation and Development in Southeast Asia*, by Peter Eaton, 2012 (Paperback), 2004 (Hardback), xii + 178 pp., \$48.95 (Paperback), ISBN 978-0-415-64957-5 (Paperback), Routledge Curzon Contemporary Southeast Asia Series, Abingdon, Routledge

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Protected areas have received increasing political and environmental policy attention in the past decades. This is also because the conventional thought that protected areas constitute a 'cornerstone of biodiversity conservation' (CBD, 2014) has further developed to that protected areas and surrounding buffer zones also inherit imperative socio-economic values and 'productive importance'. Land tenure, conservation and development in Southeast Asia by Peter Eaton explores the connections that exist - as the title suggests - between aspects of rural 'development' (including traditional land tenure and land-use practices) and conservation, with specific focus on protected areas and surrounding environments in the Southeast Asian archipelago. The volume features four parts which are further divided into 10 chapters. The book was first published in hardback in 2005; a paperback came out in 2012.

Part I provides the reader with an overview of customary land tenure systems and territorial concepts, considering land usage, colonial/historical evolutions of landownership, intrinsic values of land and traditional conservation practices and relations to protected areas. Eaton highlights rural communities' subsistence reliance on local natural resources and wider implications on local societies while also pointing out consequences of changes in the (human and natural) environment which may have rationalized other ways of landownership and which may have adversely affected indigenous practices. Yet, he also describes an increasing recognition to integrate indigenous knowledge and practices into decision-making pro-

cesses and conservation policy-making as legal pluralism in land tenure, dual economies, forest changes and population pressures on natural resources increasingly evolved as critical issues for sustainable development and conservation. Part III thus largely exemplifies the effective integration of indigenous knowledge into natural resources management based on protected area 'case studies'. The cases presented have faced similar difficulties in establishing and enforcing forest or environmental policies due to persisting resource conflicts, lack of prevention planning for natural disasters, or stakeholder complexities, politicized agendas and hierarchical structures. Part IV concludes with a critical review of attempts to promote integrated conservation and development. Education / awareness raising and development of local leadership, increased involvement of local NGOs as well as boundary-setting and registration, recognition, and the mere recording of mapping and/or documentation of customary land titles, according to Eaton, could better facilitate 'integration' and inform policy formulation and project planning.

Oddly, Land tenure, conservation and development in Southeast Asia was re-printed in paperback seven years after its first publication in hardback in 2005 without any added revisions or comments on experiences and advances made during this time. This may have added valuable and timely insights into critical discussions on integrated development concepts and on new concepts or technologies which have further developed and on how these may have influenced land-use planning, sustainable practices and planning.



Eaton's arguments for indigenous tenure and the 'sustainable' use practices of indigenous people around protected areas into decision-making processes at relevant project and national policy-making levels are still very valid, yet his argumentative links and, partially, assumptions (case studies indicate that protected areas and development projects often assume achievement of conservation objectives when contributions to local livelihoods were made and vice versa) between land tenure and conservation are all too often being repeated and not convincingly elaborated on; connections drawn to 'development' are weak, if at all.

Yet, the volume refreshingly draws largely on the author's personal conservation and development experiences in the Southeast Asian archipelago and makes a pleasant to read book. Particularly, its first two parts provide a good overview of critical issues in customary land tenure and local sustainable practices around protected areas, especially for those new to the topic area.

## Reference

CBD - Convention on Biological Diversity (2014). Protected areas – an overview. Accessed August 10 from <http://www.cbd.int/protected/overview/>.

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