

KERMEL-TORRÈS, Doryane (dir.) (2004) *Atlas of Thailand. Spatial structures and development*. Paris, Institute of Research for Development, Chiang Mai, Thailand Silkworm Books, 209 p. (ISBN 2-7099-2541-3)

Terry McGee

Volume 50, numéro 140, septembre 2006

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/014092ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/014092ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Département de géographie de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0007-9766 (imprimé)

1708-8968 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

McGee, T. (2006). Compte rendu de [KERMEL-TORRÈS, Doryane (dir.) (2004) *Atlas of Thailand. Spatial structures and development*. Paris, Institute of Research for Development, Chiang Mai, Thailand Silkworm Books, 209 p. (ISBN 2-7099-2541-3)]. *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 50(140), 247–248.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/014092ar>

activités culturelles dans toutes les régions. D'une part, des circuits touristiques culturels, mettant en valeur le patrimoine ou des festivals spécialisés, s'adressent surtout aux visiteurs et, d'autre part, diverses fêtes, bals visent davantage la population locale. De plus, la pratique des arts est favorisée par la multiplication des écoles d'art, le cas de la musique étant discuté dans l'ouvrage.

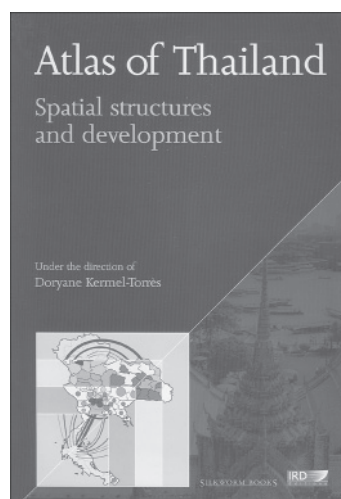
Les principales thèses du livre sont énoncées dès le premier paragraphe de l'excellente introduction de Jean-Pierre Augustin et Alain Lefebvre : la culture devient un enjeu pour le développement local ; culture populaire et « haute » culture tendent à se confondre ; la culture occupe désormais tout le territoire, de la ville à la campagne en passant par les banlieues et autres territoires périurbains.

De la lecture, se dégagent aussi deux thèmes forts : les concepts de tradition et de modernité culturelles sont inadéquats pour traiter de la culture actuelle et celle-ci devient de plus en plus un mode de renforcement des identités locales, une occasion de sociabilité. L'exemple des bals, analysé dans deux textes, montre bien que ceux-ci sont passés au fil des ans de « soupape » à celui de renforcement des liens. Même si perdure dans certaines municipalités l'impression que la culture est un luxe, la plupart y voient un atout de développement, d'où une implication croissante des administrations municipales et régionales dans le financement de la culture, mais aussi dans la réglementation et les politiques culturelles.

Les tensions ne passent pas là où on le croirait ; elles sont entre des activités pensées par *en haut*, par les autorités politiques, et celles qui viennent d' *en bas*, d'une part, et surtout entre le privé et le public, tant en matière d'espace que de financement, d'autre part. Un enjeu important est celui de l'accessibilité tant géographique que sociale. De tout cela se dégage l'impression de *pratiques hybrides*, complexes et d'une prolifération de manifestations culturelles très diversifiées, dont rendent bien compte plusieurs cartes et graphiques, et les textes, dans l'ensemble, évitent le jargon. La

situation à plusieurs égards est comparable à ce qu'on observe de ce côté-ci de l'Atlantique, comme le montre le texte de Daniel Latouche, et espérons que se multiplient non seulement les études sur des territoires particuliers, mais les comparaisons sur les nouveaux contours et territoires de la culture.

Andrée Fortin
Université Laval



KERMEL-TORRÈS, Doryane (dir.) (2004) *Atlas of Thailand. Spatial structures and development*. Paris, Institute of Research for Development, Chiang Mai, Thailand Silkworm Books, 209 p. (ISBN 2-7099-2541-3)

The volume follows in the rich tradition of previous French atlases of mainland Southeast Asia exemplified by the *Atlas of Vietnam* (Christian Taillard *et al.*, 1993) and the *Atlas of Laos* (Bouthavy Sisouphantong and Christian Taillard, 2000). In a manner similar to these earlier atlases, the Thailand study essentially presents a series of spatial themes enabling the spatial development of Thailand to be assessed. Thus the Atlas begins with a series of maps showing the spatial integration of Thailand into the global system and sub-global



region of East Asia, using such elements as trade, tourism, and population transfers as indicators of this integration. The environmental and demographic stage upon which these dual processes of global and national formation are occurring is presented in a series of maps of population distribution and internal migrations. The maps showing the ethnic and religious distributions of Chinese Thais and Muslims are particularly helpful in assessing the current tensions of the Thai state. The next section deals with the historical development of the Thai state, with a particular focus on the construction of national space. A comparison of the national space of the Thailand of the Ayutthaya Kingdom (1460-1590) (Plate 21) and the contemporary distribution of the population, urban centres, government departments, universities, etc. shows the remarkable persistence of the highly centralized political space concentrated in Bangkok and the Central Plains for almost 600 years. In no other Southeast Asian country has this historical legacy played such an important role in the creation of national space.

The next series of plates deals with aspects of the present economy of Thailand, including agriculture, industry, and the service sectors. In the latter two, the dominance of the Bangkok Metropolitan region is very pronounced despite efforts by the state to disperse these activities in the period since 1970. The atlas intersperses a number of plates indicating the development of various infrastructures, including transportation, irrigation and telecommunications, all of which are particularly valuable in graphically showing how they are principally designed to provide greater access to the Bangkok central region from peripheral regions and vice versa (Plate 28).

This spatial exploration of the formation of this core-periphery model is analysed more closely in three case studies of the Bangkok Metropolitan region (Chapter 7) and the peripheral regions of the North-East and South. Given the importance to the Thai economy

and society of the Bangkok Metropolitan region, the text and plates that describe it are rather brief and the discussion of the challenges of this rapid urbanization rather minimal. A final chapter synthesizes these spatial components into a spatial model of contemporary Thailand that combines two basic models (choremes) "to form the main components of the structuring of territory; an organization of concentric rings around a powerful center and a division into "regional" quarters. Three more models qualify or diversify this overall framework: the organization of urban gravity, the effect of dissymmetry, and the corridor effect; and to complement this the action of barriers and synapses between Thailand and surrounding countries" (p. 186). This model is an insightful and valuable tool for understanding the Thai spatial system. There is also an excellent discussion of the statistical sources used in the compilation of the Atlas and the methodological problems of representing the data at various scales. Last but not least, there is a comprehensive bibliography.

However, the Atlas is not without its limitations. Much of the statistical data is used with a 1996 baseline and very little of the 2000 census appears to have been applied. The rationale for this choice (that the 1997 meltdown of the fiscal economy made later statistics questionable) is perfectly valid, but in the period since 2000, Thailand seems to have rebounded successfully, and some analysis of these developments would have added to the depth of the Atlas. These flaws notwithstanding, the Atlas will serve as an indispensable aid to those who wish to understand development in Thailand. It also represents the central concern of French geography, i.e. the "construction of space" and the importance of space in the development process. Finally, the Atlas is also a fitting tribute to Doryane Kermel-Torrès whose important contribution to research on Thailand was cut short by her death in 2005.

Terry McGee
University of British Columbia

