

ASIEN 101 (Juli 2006)

Abstract

Sozialstruktur und Arbeitsteilung. Eine historische Skizze am Beispiel Festlandsüdostasiens (Social Structure and the Division of Labour. A Historical Outline Taking Mainland Southeast Asia as an Example)

Boike Rehbein

The history of social structures in Southeast Asia displays many traits that we consider typical for recent tendencies in globalisation: migration, diasporas, multiculturalism, the absence of nation states, and local and regional diversity. The European social sciences emerged during the rise of the nation states, which they still take as their units of analysis. Their concepts are therefore not adequate enough for analysing historical and contemporary social structures in Southeast Asia. The argument made in this paper is based on the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, albeit with several revisions of his theory. A central conceptual distinction is made between social structure and division of labour, terms which tradition has confused. "Division of labour" is conceived of as a division of work (including activities that go beyond labour) and comprises a variety of different cultures. These cultures have developed historically as divisions of work and persist as sociocultures even in modernised societies. In Southeast Asia, subsistence ethics prevails among the rural population, while patrimonialism has remained the dominating socioculture in urban environments. These sociocultures are superseded but not done away with by globalisation and modern cultures like bureaucracy and capitalism. In different parts of Southeast Asia varying configurations of sociocultures and structures emerge that build on historical and contemporary differences.

Manuscript received 2006-05-16, accepted 2006-08-11

Keywords: history of social structures, Southeast Asia, division of labour, socioculture