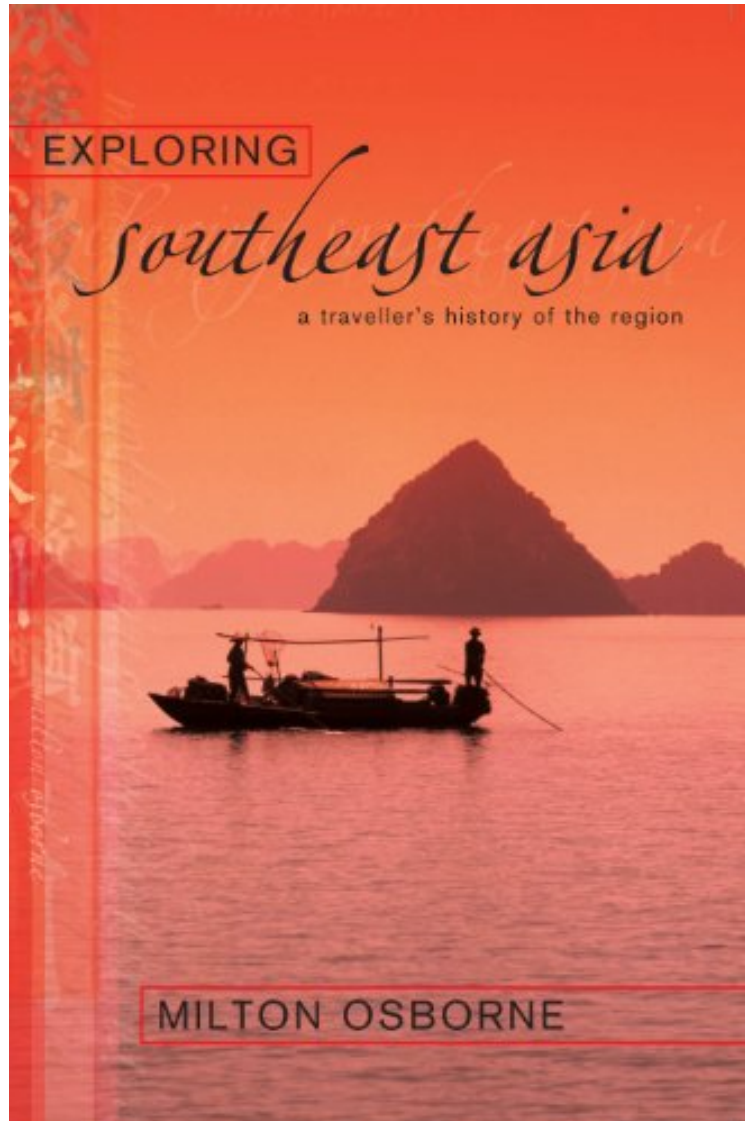


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Exploring Southeast Asia: A Traveller's History of the Region

Von Milton Osborne

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Von Milton Osborne : Exploring Southeast Asia: A Traveller's History of the Region before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Exploring Southeast Asia: A Traveller's History of the Region:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Unity in diversityVon Roman NiesThe author was doing his "exploring" 40 years long, enough time to come to terms. But the region is a steadily changing place of the size of a continent. Nevertheless the author tried to find out what are the

never changing characteristics of the South East. The image of Southeast Asia as an area of lushness, growth and fertility needs considerable qualification. It can be all these things, but it can also be a region where population pressures and the nature of the land mean that life is a continuous battle for survival. The author tried to make clear why the slogan of Indonesia "Unity in diversity" is so important for the whole of Southeast Asia. He will try to balance between these two, also an effort to find in the past history events that help to understand the present. It is a world in itself where religion - mainly Islam and Buddhism - plays a vital role of importance in the daily life and in politics. The author has other priorities. Reading the book it is becoming clear that for the author history, culture and tradition are the heart of that fascinating area. "From the grandeur of the classical years through the transformations that accompanied the arrival and eventual paramountcy of the European powers, from the bitter wars of revolution to the joys and problems of independence - here is a world both waiting and deserving to be better known". He hints at the fact that now in the end of the 20th. Century there are much more possibilities than ever before to explore the countries there and of course he encourages the reader to do so. In former times politics and limited own chances were the insurmountable hindrances. "Above all, Southeast Asia rewards a visitor who responds to the region on its own terms, conscious of the past and open to its present." Believe me, even without that, it is rewarding. Travelling is education! The area has one of the richest natural habitats of wildlife, on land and in the Sea. In this book you hear nothing of these, nothing of other touristy spots. This is no travel book! Fortunately! The author wants the reader to look at the countries on a more sophisticated basis. Great temple complexes and abandoned cities are worth a visit, but they are only one aspect of the past, just as the crowded cities of contemporary Southeast Asia provide only one insight into the region's modern identity. The deeper a visitor penetrates in this complex world, to get a glimpse of the whole in the good old tradition of the world traveller, the greater the opportunity to grasp the many strands that have shaped Southeast Asia's vibrant culture and contributed to its modern character. But the author is a little too optimistic: no doubt with a knowledge of Southeast Asia's past history, the present becomes both more understandable and so more readily appreciated, but he needs already educated readers who can appreciate his broad efforts to get out of history that relationship to the present. You could even say that his book is more history book than anything else. But highly rewarding, you get as reader in condensed form what you had otherwise to pick out from many books. And there are not many on that matter. It is true, the countries over there, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Phillipines have an apparent living tradition, showing that tradition means more to the people than a memory of the past; it is living in ceremonies and festivals, in dance, drama and in puppet theatre, in behaviour, social cults and interaction, and clothing! Think of the famous batik, the richly varied textiles as a striking example of the continuing blending of present and past. But the author is also considering the characteristics of the people. Throughout their long history, the people of Southeast Asia have shown great strength of purpose and a capacity for enormous physical energy. This has been apparent in the tireless efforts of peasants working in their fields and in the dedication of their leaders. The great temple buildings of the past testify local genius and organisational skills. So do the drained river deltas brought into cultivation and the rice terraces built on steep slopes when no other land was available for cultivation. "The age of great religious monuments such as Angkor, Pagan and Prambanan has passed, never to be repeated, but the same concentrated purpose that went into the construction of these mighty symbols of faith lives on in other ways, in the capacity shown by Cambodians to rebuild their shattered country after the terrible Pol Pot years; in the determination of an increasingly young generation throughout the region to demand more democratic forms of government..." "I missed the dispute about the conflict of the tradition and the Islam which governs the Malay people, around half of the population of Southeast Asia (250 Million), so detailed shown by Naipauls books. Islam is like a break to the traditions and causing its extermination in the long run. If you travel through Java and Bali - the Hindu-Balinese being descendants of the now Muslim Javanese - you get a good impression of how friendly the Javanese must have been some hundred years ago. It is safe to say that religions change the character of the people. The people in the Malay world were animistic before Buddhism and Hinduism was introduced a thousand years ago (or even before). They feared their neighbours and made constantly war with one another. The society was not different to all the tribal communions in the big rainforest areas of the world. Buddhism and Hinduism brought more up-building togetherness, peace and serenity - and great cultural achievements. What Islam brought besides the head scarf - the author was not clear about it. But time will tell. Part One of the book has the history up to the Second World War, part two has the time of the gaining independence, revolution and revolts, and part three the challenges of the post-colonial era and contemporary Southeast Asia. The region and its countries have only been subjects of study for a relatively short time, compared to the attention that has been given to the cultures of China or India for example. But the fact is that the Southeast has a very rich history before the colonial period. Before the Second World War, all the countries, except Thailand (Siam) were colonies of the Dutch, French, British, US Americans. The Southeast of Asia is a good place where you can still find the living past. Nowhere in the world perhaps the changes are so quick. Therefore it is a dying world as lively it may appear.

Kurzbeschreibung Southeast Asia is a tantalising part of the world. The region has undergone dramatic changes during its long and colourful history, and is marked by enormous cultural, geographical and political diversity. From the grandeur of the 'classical' years through the transformations that accompanied the arrival and eventual dominance of the European powers, and from the bitter wars of revolution to the joys and problems of independence, Exploring Southeast Asia is a lively chronicle of the region's past. Extensively illustrated with photographs and diagrams, it also includes handy brief histories and maps of all Southeast Asian nations. Exploring Southeast Asia is the ideal introduction to a world waiting and deserving to be better known. '[Milton Osborne] writes books on the region which have two qualities rarely found in combination: impeccable and authoritative scholarship, and the vividness and lightness of touch of first-rate travel writing.' - Christopher Koch

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