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SOUTHEAST ASIAN TRIBES, MINORITIES,
AND NATIONS

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
PETER KUNSTADTER

Twenty anthropologists and other specialists here report their observations—gained largely from original field work—on the relationship between rural minority groups and central governments in the developing Southeast Asian nations. Contrary to the usual picture of these tribal groups as isolated, homogeneous, stable, and conservative, the authors show them as a dynamic force in the nation-building process in Burma, China, India, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Evidence presented here shows that the Communists have recognized more clearly than have the non-Communists the strategic importance of the rural minority and tribal groups, both in the immediate military situation and in the long-run development of nation-states. There is evidence, for example, in the data from Vietnam and Laos that policies like those of the Chinese Communists with regard to minorities have been adopted by the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, the North Vietnamese government, and to a lesser extent by the Pathet Lao.

Descriptions of tribal life and government programs, together with charts, tables, maps, and photographs, provide a wealth of data on minority populations—their distribution, languages, social customs, economic and religious backgrounds. Statistics on ethnic groups in Cambodia are included in the Appendix.

Peter Kunstadter, formerly a Research Associate at Princeton University's Center of International Studies, is a Research Associate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Washington.

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