



Embodied Nation: Sport, Masculinity, and the Making of Modern Laos (Southeast Asia: Politics, Meaning, and Memory)

Simon Creak

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This strikingly original book examines how sport and ideas of physicality have shaped the politics and culture of modern Laos. Viewing the country's extraordinary transitions from French colonialism to royalist nationalism to revolutionary socialism to the modern development state through the lens of physical culture, Simon Creak's lively and incisive narrative illuminates a nation that has no reputation in sport and is typically viewed, even from within, as a country of cheerful but lazy people. Creak argues that sport and related physical practices including physical education, gymnastics, and military training have shaped a national consciousness by locating it in everyday experience. These practices are popular, participatory, performative, and, above all, physical in character and embody ideas and ideologies in a symbolic and experiential way. Combining cultural and intellectual history with historical thick description, Creak draws on a creative array of Lao and French sources from previously unexplored archives, newspapers, and magazines, and from ethnographic writing, war photography, and cartoons. More than an imagined community or a body, he shows that Laos was also a body at work, making substantive theoretical contributions not only to Southeast Asian studies and history, but to the study of the physical culture, nationalism, masculinity, and modernity in all modern societies.

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