

onelle Festkultur sich als wesentlich widerstandsfähiger und durchsetzungsstärker erwiesen hat, als die Parteiideologie, die erhebliche Abstriche an früheren Grundsätzen hin- bzw. vornehmen musste. Offenbar hat man sich auch in Hanoi nicht der hintergründigen Logik des viel zitierten Bonmots verschließen können: "Die Leute verzichten lieber auf ihren Vorteil als auf ihr Vergnügen."

Gerhard Will

**Bernhard Dahm/Vincent J.H. Houben (eds.): Vietnamese Villages in Transition: Background and consequences of Reform Policies in Rural Vietnam**

Passau: Department of Southeast Asian Studies 1999, Contributions to Southeast Asian Studies, Vol. 7, 224 pp., 20 €

Prof. Dahm, emeritus chair of Southeast Asian studies at Passau University in Bavaria/Germany, and his successor Prof. Houben, who by now holds the chair of Southeast Asian studies at Humboldt University, Berlin, present an anthology that comprises the results of joint fieldwork that three young researchers (Martin Grossheim, Kirsten W. Endres and Annette Spitzenpfeil, today Langhammer) have conducted in four rural communes in northern and southern Vietnam during 1996 and 1997. The core chapters that present the actual fieldwork findings are framed by three conceptual and historical chapters written by internationally renowned scholars in the field of rural Vietnamese studies.

In the first framing chapter John Kleinen of Amsterdam University, following the question "Is there a village in Vietnam?", gives a comprehensive overview on Vietnamese village studies, mainly those written in English or French, and relates them to changed concepts of village community as a result of postwar anthropological debate. The second chapter by Nguyen Quang Ngoc of Hanoi University complements Kleinen's account by a history of village studies in Vietnamese language. On the following thirty pages Benedict Kerkvliet of Australian National University in Canberra provides a meticulous account on cooperativisation efforts between 1955 and 1961 in North Vietnam — a process of "negotiation, accommodation, and resistance" (p. 82) during which the peasants grudgingly joined the newly set up cooperatives — though often "in name only" (p. 75). On the one hand peasants vaguely hoped for the party's two birds in the bush, i.e. for its promises to come true that cooperatives will better their living conditions, but on the other hand farmers still retained their bird in the hand as they continue to focus their efforts on their own private plot of land.

The actual village studies make up just the second half of the book. In a treatise on "The Land Issue", Grossheim details processes of land reform, collectivisation and de-collectivisation for the four visited villages. Taking the two northern villages as an example, he shows how much collective economic success there depended on building the new collective entities upon rooted identities like villages (p. 93). In all, the studied villages neatly represent the divided 'land property culture' of Vietnam's north and south. At the end Grossheim briefly points to a budding shift in the per-

ception of rural Vietnam's salient problem — away from the ever-famous land issue towards the challenge of job creation for a steadily growing rural population that — faced with worsening land shortages — migrates into the metropolises in growing numbers.

Investigating prospects for this imminent challenge, Annette Spitzenfeil contributes a perspective of rural economics. Analytical findings are largely confined to the comparative section at the end. She found out, for example, that (secretive) economic success before policy reforms of 1988 was more crucial for later business success in the north, where rural handicraft depended on domestic demand, than in the south, where rural producers catered mainly to export markets (pp. 144ff.). Spitzenfeil attributes the rather weak position of rural producers in the increasingly fierce competition with urban ones — state or private mainly to lack of capital (p. 150) — an obstacle often lamented by Vietnamese small and medium entrepreneurs. In sum, the peasant industries of all villages, in spite of an occasional boom and of progressive mechanisation, retained their character as a traditional side occupation, as participation remained on the whole confined to those who had practised it for generations (pp. 146, 152). Besides such more general observations it would have been interesting to learn more from such a micro field-study about the enterprises' "internal problems", whose importance Spitzenfeil deems growing.

Last but not least Kirsten W. Endres contributes in all three chapters focusing on socio-cultural topics to the anthology. In her first chapter on "Images of Womanhood in Rural Vietnam" (less anthropologically than the reader might expect) she stresses women's important — sometimes even dominant — position in the village and family economy. After recollecting the decline in importance Vietnamese women and their mass organisation, the Communist-party-dominated "Vietnamese Women's Union" (VWU), had experienced after the Vietnam war, Endres observes that for village women, too, the VWU appears to have lost any idealistic appeal, because most expect something in return if they join. After a section on rural women's access to credits, mostly facilitated by the VWU (containing a factual contradiction concerning collateral (p. 164), and sometimes blurring monthly and yearly interest rates), and another one on family planning, Endres concludes that rural women have paid dearly with their aggravated "drudgery" for improved living conditions in Vietnam's countryside.

The following chapter on school education and primary health care, written in collaboration with Martin Grossheim, delivers an upright quantitative account, detailing e.g. that school drop-out-rates rose sharply with economic liberalisation and levelled off with growing wealth. It conveys truisms like poor children are likelier to drop out of school or low teacher-salaries impair teaching quality yet stops short of deeper conclusions like the question of a possible connection between educational quality and market reforms (p. 191).

In the closing chapter, Endres conveys valuable insights into the most obscure realm of village life, i.e. religious and spiritual rituals. She illustrates the connection between economic and spiritual liberalisation when observing that in one village, with growing wealth derived from handicraft, worshipping shifted from the village's guardian deities to the founder of the craft. During the 1980s, in a process the Viet-

namese call "culturalization of politics", restrictive state policy towards rituals softened more and more due to "pressure from below", e.g. in a process of "dialogic restructuring of *dinh* (a village's communal house) rituals", as villagers in growing numbers resumed to perform rituals that went beyond ancestor worshipping (p. 204). In the south, where the *dinh* had always been confined to religious functions, political and spiritual spheres were separated more clearly than in the north. Possibly, this contributed to a generally more lenient attitude of southern state authorities even towards officially undesired rituals like superstitious practices or spirit possession rituals, which villagers in the south — unlike northern villagers — dare to perform in public.

A little upgrading of the book's basic layout, like a shared bibliography at the end, a summary of basic data of the four studied villages, spelling Vietnamese terms complete with diacritical marks, an index, or at least more detailed contents tables showing also section headings, would have rendered the text much more accessible and useful.

To sum up, the anthology convenes texts of diverging quality and disparate analytical focuses. The actual empirical account is rather too brief and too weak on the analysis. This holds although it must be admitted that western social science research in rural Vietnam still faces huge difficulties in terms of accessibility of villages and in obtaining reliable first hand data. The book would certainly have gained value if the authors had made such difficulties, and with them the methods they used and their experiences in the field, an important topic of discussion in itself. Down the same line of argument more direct reporting of villager's statements like in Endres' chapter on women would have made the accounts livelier.

Erland Meyer

### **Margrith A. Lin-Huber: Chinesen verstehen lernen. Wir – die Andern: erfolgreich kommunizieren**

Bern: Verlag Hans Huber, 2001, 241 S., 19,95 €

In den letzten Jahren sind im Zuge des immer wichtiger werdenden interkulturellen Managements und Sprachtrainings sowie zum Thema interkulturelle Kommunikation zahlreiche Bücher publiziert worden – sowohl zu Gesamtasien als auch zu einzelnen Ländern/Regionen. Lin-Huber, die sich rein auf den chinesischen Kulturkreis bezieht – und das Buch ihrem chinesischen Schwiegervater widmet –, behandelt die kulturspezifischen Höflichkeitsprinzipien und Verhaltensstile des chinesischen Volks in einer Ausführlichkeit und Tiefe, die das Werk sehr empfehlenswert macht.

Nach einer kurzen Einführung folgen neun große Hauptteile, die gleichzeitig – in unterschiedlicher Länge – 24 Kapitel (die Zahlen sind sicherlich nicht zufällig gewählt) ausmachen, am Ende finden sich ein Glossar mit chinesischen Zeichen und ein Literaturverzeichnis. Im Text selbst benutzt die Autorin die Pinyin-Umschrift für nichtübertragbare Begriffe oder chinesische Zitate und Ausdrücke.