

scher Identität. Zu heterogen sind für Rüländ die asiatischen Kulturen, die zudem nicht von unten gewachsen sondern von den jeweiligen Eliten definiert worden seien. Gegen eine Asiatisierung Asiens spreche auch die Irreversibilität westlicher Modernisierungseinflüsse.

Fast ausschließlich von westlichen Vorstellungen geprägt sind bislang die Theorien internationaler Beziehungen, denen Jürgen Haacke, London School of Economics and Political Science, den "hierarchischen Ansatz" von David C. Kang entgegenstellte. Im Unterschied zu sämtlichen gängigen Schulen geht der in *International Security* kontrovers diskutierte Ansatz nicht von einem System souveräner und gleicher Staaten aus. Vielmehr wird ein Szenario entworfen, wonach China langfristig wieder seinen Rang als zentraler Staat Ostasiens zurückeroberet und mittels eines festgelegten Normengefüges sein Verhältnis zu den übrigen asiatischen Staaten regelt. Empirisch konnte Haacke einige Belege für eine solche Entwicklung entdecken – etwa in der Hoffnung vieler asiatischer Staaten auf chinesische Auslandsinvestitionen oder der Bevorzugung des chinesischen Ordnungskonzeptes; bei diesem werde zwar nicht minder Druck ausgeübt als beim amerikanischen, allerdings manifestiere sich die Einflussnahme nicht öffentlich, was dem in Asien gepflegten Politikstil entgegenkomme. Allerdings sei fraglich, ob der Westen eine solche Stellung Chinas akzeptieren würde und etwa Japan bereit wäre, sich unterzuordnen.

Viele Fragezeichen standen auch am Ende der Asiengespräche hinter dem Tagungstitel "Die Asiatisierung Asiens?" Einzelnen hoffnungsvollen intellektuellen Strömungen und fruchtbaren Versuchen zur Vergemeinschaftung, darunter erfolgreiche "Economic Growth Areas", stehen weiterhin massive Hindernisse entgegen. Aus teils schwachen und instabilen Staaten lässt sich eben nur schwerlich eine starke Gemeinschaft formen.

Die vierten Weingartener Asiengespräche finden vom 11. bis 13. Februar 2005 statt – voraussetzliches Thema: Demokratisierung.

Stefan Rother

International Conference on Contemporary Rural Development in China

Beijing, PR China, College of Humanities and Development (COHD), China Agricultural University, February 19-21, 2004

In a three day international conference the Center for Integrated Agricultural Development, College of Humanities and Development (CIAD/COHD) of the China Agricultural University, brought together a wide range of established experts on rural development in China and a number of distinguished international scholars in Development Studies to discuss the current situation in China's countryside. Simultaneously, the conference served as a meeting of the COHD International Advisory Committee which was established with funding from the Ford Foundation to enhance the capacity of COHD as an academic institution in the field of Development Studies. The combination of national and international perspectives realized in this way greatly enriched the conference proceedings. On the first day Chinese paper presenters from key national research institutes focused on issue areas of China's rural development ranging from poverty (Li Xiaoyun) and ecology (Li Zhou) to food safety (Wang Dongyang) and biotechnology (Huang Jikun). International speakers contributed general assessments of third world development (John Harriss, Norman Uphoff) and case studies from different world regions to put the Chinese experiences into context. Others addressed the role of agricultural and social sciences in rural development (Jaqueline Ashby, Uwe Jens Nagel). Together these papers highlighted the enormous changes taking place in the Chinese country-

side while at the same time pointing at huge remaining difficulties. In an organizational perspective, one of these identified challenges rests on the need to combine academic research and active development interventions (funded by domestic as well as international sources) in a more efficient way.

The second day proceeded in this direction as it was devoted to presentation and discussions of previous work done by COHD and its College of Rural Development (CORD) in particular. CORD used to function as a stand-alone research and teaching institution within the China Agricultural University and was originally founded in 1984 with German technical assistance provided through GTZ as Center for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD). As such it developed over the 1990s from a development consulting agency to a teaching institution without shedding its previous emphasis on practical project work. Thus, it is now the only institution in China with a long history of on-the-ground work and strong academic credentials in a field otherwise dominated by government-affiliated or purely academic think-tanks. How to still boost these credentials and make this institution more well-known internationally was the focus of an extensive exchange of views between the COHD staff members and their International Advisory Committee.

The third day's emphasis rested on participatory research methods, like Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), and started with a presentation by Robert Chambers, one of the founding fathers of this approach. Participatory approaches have become commonplace in development projects and related applied research. The application of these approaches in China has been controversial because of their inherent democratic nature. Nevertheless, a number of speakers documented the growing regional networks of PRA activists as well as an increasing willingness on the part of government agencies to accept them in case of internationally financed projects. Even more encouraging is the fact that the discourse of participation has been adopted even by some government agencies responsible for poverty alleviation or forestry management. Although this falls well short of incipient democratization, there are certain attitudinal changes involved and successful grassroots projects can be expected to have some empowering effect on those involved. In sum, this conference provided a rare and much needed opportunity of exchange between academic circles and practitioners in development.

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