

Herdick's study may well become a valuable source book for other researchers interested in the complex field of Newar settlements and culture. Unfortunately books like this, written in languages other than English, are not accessible to the country's own researchers nor to those in charge of looking after the country's cultural heritage.

*Peter Herrle*

MICHAEL NEBELUNG, *Mobilisierung und Organisation von Kleinbauern und Landarbeitern im ländlichen Bangladesh - Bedeutung und Perspektiven einer von Nicht-Regierungs-Organisationen verfolgten Entwicklungsstrategie*. Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung (VWB), 1988. 279 pp., DM 29,80

In the context of Bangladesh and the catastrophic perspectives for many of its people, this book, which was submitted and accepted as a doctoral thesis, is supposed to show "how farmers and labourers fight against exploitation and domination". The author assumes that theoretical discussions and arguments concerning "final truths in development politics" and the "search for final solutions to the eradication of poverty" are superfluous and irrelevant. Thus it is his aim to demonstrate how "non-governmental organizations" are "taking their destiny into their own hands" and focusing their efforts on the "poorest".

"Development from below" and "mobilization and organization" as well as "denationalization or disestablishment of development politics" are the catchwords describing the basis for the following presentation and the "world view" of the author. From the thus defined "position" the author proceeds to describe and analyze the examples of two non-governmental organizations: "Nijera Kori" and "Proshika".

The book is subdivided into four parts. In Part I some preliminary considerations concerning the approach of the book, the author's concept of development, the situation of Bangladesh and the structure of the following presentation are developed. This leads to the presentation of the theoretical approach concerning "mobilization and social movement".

Part II which is concerned with "mobilization and organization in rural Bangladesh" contains an elaborate account of the author's personal viewpoint and his methodological approach. Then "aspects of the agrarian and power structure" are presented and the function of non-governmental organizations for development in Bangladesh, specifically the two NGOs, are discussed. The

political and strategical programmes of the two NGOs are described as they are presented by the leaders in their central bureaux.

Under the title "mobilization in practice", the two NGOs "Nijera Kori" and "Proshika" and their activities in two project regions are introduced in Part III. The first organization tries to mobilize rural people via a "conscientization approach", the second also promotes "credit distribution". Conclusions are drawn in the final Part IV.

The study is based on a nine month stay in Bangladesh including two stays in the respective project regions of approximately two months each. During the field stays "skills and qualities were demanded of the author daily, which he had never expected to possess: infinite patience, tact, sensitivity and understanding of other people's problems".

The high moral grounds and the personal "hardships" endured by the author make it a difficult task for the reviewer to comment on the developmental and theoretical insights. Further: the book touches on many discussions, theories and levels of exposition, leading the reader from one aspect to the next, seldom thoroughly elaborating, yet confronting him once in a while with rather unqualified polemics. A discussion of all these aspects would go beyond the framework of this review.

As regards development, no one denies the necessity of "mobilization", of the focus on the "rural poor" and the "grass root approach", not even the Bangladeshi government, World Bank etc. - although these insights are not always politically and efficiently carried through. The question that still remains unsolved, except perhaps for the author, is how - under the present depressing conditions - things can be improved. Even though the author criticises theories leading to "salvation" - a term he never explains - he himself has found one: "mobilization and conscientization" followed by a "fundamental redistribution of power and property". Isn't it easy? So as not to be misunderstood: these really are necessary - to a certain extent -, nobody denies it. But many people also know that it needs much more than just this and that idealism alone, if at all, can always only be a part.

The theoretical explications of "mobilization" do not seem too relevant to the practitioner, and the scientist interested in the topic will prefer to study the original texts. The methodological explications of the author are quite interesting in several respects and the reasons for employing the methodological approach adopted in the empirical study seem to be quite valid. But it seems that the validity of the author's own approach was not quite enough: other approaches leading to different considerations and, perhaps, results were polemically disqualified, demonstrating an embarrassing naivity and a lack of methodological and theoretical foundations of the arguments.

Problematic, in the view of the reviewer, are the sometimes rather inaccurate and misleading descriptions of the agrarian structure of Bangladesh. Here, as elsewhere, a very readable account is intermingled with statements such as: Whoever owns less than a two acre subsistence farm is effectively landless. It is true that very many people are extremely poor, that the ownership of landed property is heavily skewed in favor of ten per cent of the population which owns perhaps half of all the land. But that does not make almost everybody else landless. The author must have got something wrong here. There is not enough space to further illustrate this criticism: in a superficially easily readable text there are many instances where scientific analysis and careful judgement and evaluation are replaced by the author's values.

Some comments should not be omitted as regards form:

- A table of contents including up to sixteen sections at the same level indicates a lack of conceptual structuring, an enumeration of aspects.
- An extremely small type of print - more than 4000 letters to a page and more than five different styles of emphasizing and/or underlining words transform the task of reading into an ordeal.
- The two chapters describing the two NGOs' activities are almost exact copies of each other, with minor changes and omissions in the second one, and with numerical values exchanged, of course.

Finally, two points must be made:

1. The author deserves credit for describing two (not exactly representative) NGOs, their successes and their failures.
2. The journalistic presentations of the findings lack precision and reliability in some aspects. The fact that economic details and "control groups" are not available makes it difficult to evaluate and cross-check the findings.

The book under review is written in a fluent, committed style. It describes - in the second half - important self-help approaches. Even though many aspects remain problematical, anyone concerned with development aid and politics in Bangladesh should try to read this book.

*Dietmar Herbon*