

Der Gedankenaustausch wurde lediglich von gemeinsamen – vegetarischen – Mahlzeiten und von Meditationen unterbrochen, die ebenfalls der Pluralität Rechnung trugen: in teils parallelen Sitzungen leiteten Vertreter verschiedener buddhistischer Traditionen Gruppenmeditationen auf die in ihrer Tradition übliche Weise an. Am Ende der Tagung standen nochmals verschiedene Berichte über die Arbeit der BRG auf dem Programm, darunter eine kurze Darstellung der Problematik der "Lotosblätter", des gemeinsamen Publikationsorgans der BRG und der DBU; inzwischen ist zwar die zweite Nummer erschienen, aber das Blatt hat noch keine ganz klare Linie gefunden. Der Konvent klang mit der Sammlung von Vorschlägen für die Gestaltung des nächsten Treffens aus. Auch hier wurden die gegensätzlichen Wünsche laut; lediglich der Wunsch, auf parallel laufende Meditationen zu verzichten und statt dessen nur noch zusammen zu meditieren, blieb unwidersprochen, und dieses Bedürfnis nach Gemeinschaftsgefühl war in gewisser Weise charakteristisch für den Verlauf des Konvents.

Jens-Uwe Hartmann

VIII Bielefeld Colloquium on Southeast Asia Cities and Peasants: Peasants and Cities

29-30 January, 1988

This international workshop, organized by the Southeast Asia Programme of the Sociology of Development Research Centre, University of Bielefeld, was opened by the conference convener, Prof. Jeremy H. Kemp (Bielefeld/Canterbury) with a paper on "Peasants and Cities: The Cultural and Social Image of the Peasant Community". In this paper Prof. Kemp drew attention to the still firmly entrenched image of a Southeast Asian "village community", which to his mind has been a seductive mirage, misleading researchers for the past few decades. Particularly in Thailand, villages are perhaps administrative units used by the government to introduce administrative control, but not social units from the point of view of Thai peasants. This view was fully supported in the paper of Frans Hüsken (Amsterdam) on urban politics in Javanese villages and the paper of Peter Nas (Leiden) "Town and Countryside: A Sceptic's View, Illustrated with Some Indonesian Sociological

Evidence". Tilman Schiel (Bielefeld) took the debate on local communities back to the Greek concept of the *oikos* which was then interpreted as an incomplete community rather than an autark closed household. He then continued to explain his views that the modernization of Java during the colonial period actually resulted in "paganization" in which Javanese peasants were more and more defined as uncivilized remnants of an otherwise modernizing urban society.

A number of further papers illustrated how intensively connected Southeast Asian "villages" are with urban society or, as Suparb Pas-Ong (Bielefeld) argued, even with the world market. These papers were: "Urban or Agrarian? The Modern Thai State" by Rüdiger Korff (Bielefeld), "Rise and Decline of Provincial Elites in the Philippines" by Prof. Willem Wolters (Nijmegen), "Urban Power and Influence in the Minahasa Village" by Prof. Ulrich Mai (Bielefeld), "The Peasant-Urban Interface in Malaysia" by Prof. Bill Wilder (Durham), and "Change and Continuity in Thai (Rural) Society – Formal Social Structures and Unwritten Rules of Behaviour" by Hans-Dieter Bechstedt (Bielefeld/Bangkok).

Among many issues discussed during this symposium was the use of concepts and constructs like "village community" or "patron-client relations", or the "state", which are indeed powerful tools to structure, administrate or dominate Southeast Asian rural society. Social scientists should, as well as development experts, beware of a reification of these concepts that might divert the attention of researchers and practitioners away from social reality rather than help to explain it. This Bielefeld Colloquium on Southeast Asia, the eighth of a series, was financially supported by the regular budget of the Documentation Unit for Asian, African and Latin American Studies of the Sociology of Development Research Centre, University of Bielefeld.

Hans-Dieter Evers

Foundation of Organization for Social Science Research on Japan

At the 7th German Meeting of Japanologists in June, 1987 three "commuters" between Japanese studies and sociology/political science suggested the foundation of an organization for social science research on Japan in West Germany.

There had been previous intensive discussions and, above all, reports of personal experiences in the examination of social science questions concerning Japan.