

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.

The present situation is, in our opinion, characterized on the one hand by the inclusion of Japan in – mainly comparative – investigations by more and more social scientists (more for reasons of systematically justified interest than as a passing craze), and on the other hand by a certain opening of Japanologists towards social science questions. Both of these developments, however, are proceeding isolated from each other; again and again there is a noticeable mutual fear of contact with each other which is expressed by the one side accusing the other of a lack of knowledge of the language/country or, the other way around, of knowledge of scientific methods and theory.

We find this development regrettable and think that precisely the different scientific background can lead to a productive interdisciplinary discussion, after incorrect information and prejudices have been done away with through personal contact. An amalgamation of social scientists and Japanologists concerned with social and socio-political questions bearing on present day Japan could fulfil the function of supplying information on current projects, events and conferences by means of regular newsletters, of supporting cooperation and interdisciplinary discussion by arranging meetings and conferences and, finally, of serving as a "meeting place" for all presently – or in the future – dealing with social science matters concerning Japan and in need of contacts, technical support and the like.

So many colleagues from Japanology concerned with social science themes approved of the idea of such an organization that we were able to constitute ourselves as an "organization in the process of foundation". At the end of June, 1987, on the occasion of a conference of colleagues from sociology, political science and economy concerned with Japan held at the Wissenschaftszentrum in Berlin, we presented the concept again. After a lively discussion, the response was so positive that Dr. G. Foljanty-Jost, U. Möhwald and Dr. W. Seifert, all from Berlin, were instructed to prepare a draft of the constitution and the first members' assembly, on the occasion of which the constitution is to be passed.

In October, 1987, a draft of the constitution was sent out together with the second newsletter which, like the first, reports on events, conferences and projects. The preparations for the first proper members' assembly in connection with a scientific conference have already begun.

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