

Irene Nørlund, Sven Cederroth, Ingela Gerdin (eds.): *Rice Societies. Asian Problems and Prospects.* (Studies on Asian Topics, 10). London: Curzon Press/Riverdale: The Riverdale Company, 1986. 321 pages, £ 6.75

"Rice Societies" grew out of an interdisciplinary conference on 'Wet Rice Agriculture and Social Development in Southeast Asia' organized in 1981 by the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies. The book consists of an introduction by the editors and revised versions of thirteen of the conference papers divided into five sections.

In the first section, "Rice Cultivation: General Perspectives", the geographer Sofus Christiansen presents basic information about rice types, cultivation systems and possibilities of increasing productivity through technological improvements. The French anthropologist Georges Condominas, the only non-Scandinavian contributor, describes aspects of what he labels 'ritual technology' among the Mong Gar of Central Vietnam.

"Irrigation Systems and their Maintenance: the Case of Sri Lanka", the second section, comprises three articles. Jan Lundquist examines land and water development in a historical perspective and the present role of government officials in irrigation management. The geographer Jan Hesselberg investigates reasons for the poor maintenance of irrigation facilities in southern Sri Lanka. John Bryde, a social anthropologist, analyzes causes and effects of an increasing commercialization of agriculture in a village in the dry zone of Sri Lanka.

In the third section entitled "The Impact of the Green Revolution: The Case of Indonesia", the social anthropologists Sven Cederroth and Ingela Gerdin compare the response of two village communities on the island of Lombok to the government-sponsored introduction of High Yielding Varieties of rice in the early 1970s. Hans Antlöv, another social anthropologist, discusses changes in rice harvesting methods in Java in relation to the general trend towards a commercialization of social relations in Indonesian society.

Section four, "Commoditization and Types of Agrarian Systems: Historical Perspectives", includes an overview of social and economic studies on Vietnam by the historian Irene Nørlund, an essay on rice production, consumption, market relations and social differentiation in Vietnam from 1900 to 1930 by the same author, and an article by Evald Aspengren, another historian, examining the economic and social impact of the world economic crisis of the 1930s in the areas of Madiun and Priangan in Java.

Three essays on "Macro-Theoretical Perspectives" form the concluding section of the book. The archaeologist Per Sørensen comments theories about the origin of rice cultivation and its spread into Southeast Asia. The social anthropologist Mikael

Gravers examines changing class relations in Thailand during the nineteenth century. Finally, the geographer Søren Munk discusses irrigation systems as a form of social adjustment to environmental constraints.

Given this diversity of topics, the editors must be complimented for having tried to accomplish more than a loose assortment of articles. In the introduction, they place the contributions to the book in the wider context of current research trends and debates about development issues in Asian countries. They summarize the main lines of argument of the articles, pointing out differences and similarities in the authors' viewpoints and findings. Finally, they indicate possible directions of future developments as well as factors influencing them. Prefaces to three of the five sections of the volume provide useful background information to the following essays.

The editors advocate interdisciplinary approaches in the effort to find solutions for urgent development problems. By demonstrating the different perspectives from which the various disciplines represented in the book conventionally approach their subjects, "Rice Societies" certainly serves to underline the urge for closer cooperation.

The reader hoping to find the contours of a "Scandinavian School" in the form of a coherent and original theoretical paradigm will, however, be disappointed. Most of the authors appear to follow mainstreams of their respective disciplines, as e. g. the anthropologists who employ concepts such as commercialization and commoditization in their analyses without further elaboration.

In the editor's own words, "one of the main justifications for publishing this volume is to mirror the varying theoretical as well as regional interests among Scandinavian scholars working in this region and present this to a wider forum." It is only since the 1960s that a larger number of Scandinavians have developed these interests, and for the most part their studies have indeed gone unnoticed so far. This book proves that they deserve more attention.

Wolfgang Claus

Paul Bucherer-Dietsch/Christoph Jentsch (eds.): Afghanistan. Ländermonographie (Schriftenreihe der Stiftung Bibliotheca Afghonica, 4). Liestal: Bibliotheca Afghonica, 1986. 492 pp., SFR 48.-

The book is an up-dated edition of the earlier volume "Afghanistan – Natur, Geschichte und Kultur, Staat, Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft", edited by Willi Kraus, Tübingen 1972. Though the articles are by the same authors they have been revised, thus bringing the new edition up to date. Some of the historical and ethnographic