

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

articles have been omitted and some political articles on the present situation in Afghanistan have been added.

Nevertheless, the larger part of the book deals with pre-revolutionary Afghanistan. For obvious reasons: the scientific material that became available after 1978 is very scarce and rudimentary. Academic exchanges between Afghanistan and the West have gradually petered out during the last six – eight years. None of the authors has – to my knowledge – visited Afghanistan after the fall of Daoud. The more recent information contained in the book was brought to Germany either by journalists (often via Pakistan) or by Afghan political refugees. Both sources can not, for obvious reasons, be recognized as genuine scientific material.

The editors were aware of these shortcomings. They also knew that Afghanistan is no longer a prominent topic of scientific research. They even knew that the publication of the book might be, in financial terms, a risky venture. Still, they decided in favour of publication, because they felt that the interest of the scientific community in Afghanistan should be kept alive. This moral attitude of the publishers deserves respect.

As a handbook for the analysis of Afghanistan's present political situation, the publication probably does not contain enough actual facts. As a resource-volume for the understanding of the background and the genesis of the present conflict, however, the book is extremely useful and commendable. If it helps to keep the memory of Afghanistan and of the Afghan people alive till a better future dawns for them, the book will have served its purpose very well.

Franz-Josef Vollmer

Atiur Rahman: *Political Economy of SARC.* Dhaka: The University Press Limited. 1985. x, 99 pp.

The South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC) of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives was initiated by Zia-ur Rahman, the late Bangladesh president, and reflects Bangladesh's orientation towards South Asia after her attempts to join the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) were not welcomed by its members. Thus it reflects Bangladesh's search for a political 'home' after secession from Pakistan and her fear of her overpowering neighbour India. That these plans were taken up by all the other South Asian nations, above all by India and Pakistan, might be seen as an indication of their endeavours to steer clear of the geo-political controversies. After initiating SARC, however, Bangladesh seems to have lost the initiative, especially after the assassination of president