

the People's Republic of China and Cuba, as well as on selected problems of socialist agrarian policy and small commodity production.

The reader's attention is focussed first of all on the comparative analysis by P. Gey and W. Quaisser which opens the series of papers. This article fulfills a twofold purpose: On the one hand, it presents an introduction to the leading principles and ideas of socialist agrarian policy; on the other, the authors make the difficult attempt to evaluate the different factor allocations under economic and political aspects.

Despite the heterogeneity of approaches presented by the different authors regarding various countries and socialist systems (S. Merl and T. Bergmann: Soviet Union; W. Quaisser: Poland; G. Varga: Hungary; J. Erling: People's Republic of China; P. Gey: Cuba), they display remarkable insight into the need for regional/sub-national differentiation within the framework of socialist goals on the national/governmental level. Especially in large countries the centrally planned economy demands modifications due to the varying economic "intensities" of regions, their degree of urbanization and/or industrialization. The inherent antagonism between agriculture and industry as a leading sector, the role of the urban-rural relationship in guaranteeing nutrition and food supply and of the private sector in agricultural production are other features worth mentioning in this volume.

The experiences and results from the variety of socialist agrarian systems presented here might provide some orientation for Third World countries' development planning to overcome hunger and malnutrition.

Axel V. Stremplat

WERNER ENDE / UDO STEINBACH (eds.): *Der Islam in der Gegenwart. Entwicklung und Ausbreitung. Staat, Politik und Recht. Kultur und Religion.* München: C.H. Beck, 1983. 774 pages, illustr., maps. DM 138.-

The book reviewed in the following paragraphs aims at overcoming a deficit which has existed among German publications on Islam for quite a while. In their foreword the editors point out that they are only marginally interested in the more religious and theological dimensions of Islam. Instead, the book is an attempt at a comprehensive description of the role played by contemporary forms of Islam in societies where Moslems constitute either the majority of the population or represent at least a relevant minority. According to those responsible for its publication, the volume is intended to be used as a handbook. Both the interested layman as well as the expert wishing to deepen his or her knowledge about specific aspects of recent developments in the Islamic world should find the book useful.

Almost thirty authors have contributed to this extensive handbook (774 pages) which itself is divided up into three main sections.

The historical introduction is followed by the main section which concentrates on the political role of contemporary Islam and includes not less than 16 case-studies along with two more general chapters about modern economic structures and the Islamic legal system. Each chapter deals with varying emphasis on the importance of Islam and Islamic law in the different countries. Geographically, these studies cover the Middle and the Far East (including China and the USSR) as well as the African continent.

Chapters on militant Islamic groups, on mystical brotherhoods, on sects and on international Islamic Organisations complete this central part of the handbook.

The last third of the volume sums up the situation regarding 'Contemporary Islamic Culture and Civilisation' with various articles on such different topics as literature, architecture, language and local traditions.

Looking at each of the main parts in greater detail, it can be said that the first section gives a more than adequate overview on Islamic history. Its length corresponds with the intentions of the editors and includes enough references to more detailed studies for those who want to follow up specific aspects. Of special value is doubtless the fifth and last chapter of part one, which provides an empirical breakdown of the distribution of Muslims worldwide, based on a number of very recent sources.

The introductory contributions of the second part elaborate on the most relevant and important issues within the social and legal order of contemporary Islamic societies without getting lost in details. This makes for interesting reading in the case of the majority of topics discussed. However, there are a few passages which leave one with the feeling that the authors withheld necessary explanations perhaps a little too often. For example, in the chapter on economic questions, the works of such a reputable expert on Islamic society as Maxime Rodinson have not been taken into consideration it seems.

The studies of various countries represent a multiplicity of approaches almost equal to the number of contributions themselves. It is obvious that the editors deliberately included articles that not only vary in length but also in the way in which the individual authors discuss their topics. As a result, the reader gains a slightly different perspective on Islam with each article he or she reads.

The studies on countries such as Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Maghreb states are mentioned here as "primum inter pares". They particularly excel by being informative and comprehensive at the same time. This also holds for the chapters on mystical brotherhoods and popular Islam which complete this most important section of the handbook.

Of the last part of this handbook which also proves to be very diversified, two chapters are particularly worth mentioning, namely that which gives an overview on contemporary Islamic literature and that dealing with syncretism in Northern Africa and Indonesia. Both articles are obviously written by authors

who not only know their subject very well, but who also have the ability to present their field in a manner that does not intimidate the less well versed, but nevertheless interested, reader.

Coming to a general and final appraisal it can be said that this handbook indeed fulfills the expectations raised in the foreword. There is one major obstacle, however, preventing this meritorious new publication from being accessible to every serious student of Islam whose native language is German, and that is the comparatively high price (DM 138.-). One can only hope that the publishers soon agree to issue a paperback edition.

Hans-Jürgen Koch

JAKOB RÖSEL: Die Hinduismusthese Max Webers. Folgen eines kolonialen Indienbildes in einem religions-soziologischen Gedankengang. (Materialien zu Entwicklung und Politik, Vol.22). München, Köln, London: Weltforum Verlag, 1982. IV, 102 pages. DM 29.80

The author's most surprising thesis is the assertion that there was no caste-system in India in the strict sense of the word before British domination. According to Rösel European bureaucrats and scholars - among the latter Max Weber - accepted the religious *sāstras* (textbooks) of the brahmins uncritically as depicting the reality of Hindu society. But neither were European scholars so ivory-towered as to accept the absolute supremacy of the brahmins, claimed by brahmin scholars, as a historical fact nor can it be overlooked that the strictly hierarchical organization of the caste-system was no product of British rule. The structural basis of Hindu society is caste, and Sanskritization (i.e. a far-reaching cultural penetration of society by Hindu customs and laws) cannot be understood without reference to the structural framework in which it occurs. Generally speaking, the castes at the top of the hierarchy are more Sanskritized than castes at the lower and middle end of the scale, and this has been responsible for the Sanskritization of the lower castes as well as the tribals. The lower castes always seem to have tried to take over the customs and way of life of the higher castes. On the other hand Rösel's great work "Der Palast des Herrn der Welt" (München and London 1980) shows that a cult such as that of the wooden god Jagannātha of Puri (originally a tribal deity in *Orisā*) became increasingly transformed by brahmins who attempted to play the main role in the ritual. In his analytical study ("Der Holzgott und die Brahmanen", Wiesbaden 1984) of the *Puruṣottama-Māhātmya*, a kind of pilgrim's guide, Ulrich Schneider investigates the different strata of this text and comes to the conclusion that some centuries ago the tribes of *Orisā* supported the kings of that region and therefore were able to establish a cult free from caste-