

the important "scissors-effect" which rural cultivators have to face and which is due to the unfavourable relation between high farm input prices and low farm output prices.

According to the editor, the collection of essays is intended "to give an objective picture of this country and its people" (p. VII). The reviewer feels that this aim has not been - or only partly - achieved. The reason is that this collection lacks a comprehensive introduction which points out the major problems and conflicts, an introduction indispensable for such an interdisciplinary exercise in that it would provide a theoretical framework and some important linkages between the different topics and sections. In my view, a new edition of this collection which would not only do away with some of the basic errors but also include an up-to-date list of references and the latest statistics, is badly needed. In addition, it would be a great improvement if the cooperation of some other authors (from Thailand perhaps?) could be encouraged so that the modernization-theory oriented scholars do not predominate to the extent they do. These 'local' authors, and I refer in particular to scholars like Chatthip Nartsupha, Preecha Piengpongsam, Prof. Chettana and Saneh Chamarik, represent the critical and socially-conscious school in Thailand and their contribution would help to ensure a more balanced account of the situation.

In his chapter on the history of the kingdom of Thailand K. Wenk writes: "In accordance with the character of the Thai people, historical accounts of their country are more like chronicles. These include every little detail to the last but fail to criticize or evaluate" (p. 126). Thus, after reading this collection on Thailand by a majority of German experts, one question keeps recurring: "Have these foreign scholars perhaps adapted themselves too well already to the so-called "character" of their object of study?"

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ALMUT MEY: Untersuchungen zur Wirtschaft in den Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bangladesh). Bremen: Überseemuseum, 1979. 368 pages, DM 58.-.

WOLFGANG MEY: Politische Systeme in den Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh. Bremen: Überseemuseum, 1980. 289 pages, DM 41.-.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) are one of four districts of the Chittagong Division in Bangladesh. Bordering on Indian Tripura and Mizo Hill District and on the Burmese province Arakan, this area of about 5 000 square miles is different in many ways from Bengal Bangladesh: the population of about half a million consists mainly of tribespeople of Mongol origin who are predominantly Buddhists, with some Christian and in particular animist influence. The most

important of the more than ten ethnic groups are the Chakmas, Bawm, Mru, Khumi, Marma and Tippera.

Almut and Wolfgang Mey are two German ethnologists who were in the CHT in 1968/69 and 1970/71. The books discussed in this review are the product of field and additional research, submitted to the University of Zurich as Ph.D. theses in 1977.

Ethnological research on the CHT has been very limited and is now outdated. Access to the remote Hill Tracts is difficult anyway; moreover neither the Pakistan nor the Bangladesh government have permitted visits to the Tracts since 1964. This has made research even more difficult.

Almut Mey has based her monograph on the economy of the CHT on a sample of ca. 600 households in 24 villages representing the three major eco-economic areas of the tracts. The villages covered are four Bawm, one Khiang, one Taungchengya, two Marma, five Mru, two Tippera, one Khumi representing the hill people, and three Chakma, two Taungchengya, three Marma representing the population in the valleys. In a comprehensive and systematic way the main features of production are discussed against the background of the data collected in the 24 villages. Major areas deal with division of work in the communities including division of work between men and women; description and comparison between different stages of development of production; shifting cultivation as the main type of production (called *jhum*); generation and distribution of income in particular the relationship between production for home consumption and the start of market relations, increasingly relevant as a result of the growing influx of Bengali settlers who control trade, whereas money-lending does not seem to be in the hands of Bengalis to the same extent at the time the book was written. There is no question, however, that pressure to become part of the market economy will increase, especially on ethnic groups such as Mru, Khumi and Tippera. Cash crop growing already plays a certain role in the valleys (pineapple, mandarins). In the wake of the Kaptai hydro-electric project started in 1957 some 100 000 people became displaced persons; compensation schemes by the then Pakistani government were inadequate and contributed further to landlessness, a feature very dangerous to tribes-people practising shifting cultivation.

Wolfgang Mey presents a history of the political systems including a discussion of varying forms of political and kinship organizations prior to the British annexation in 1860. Tribes covered are Chakma, Marma, Bawm, Mru and Khumi as well as others for the pre-colonial period. Chittagong seems to have been conquered for the first time in the ninth century by a Buddhist king from Arakan. Since then there have been fights again and again between groups and kings but continuous occupation rarely took place: the Moghul empire extended its control to the tracts in the sixteenth century, but Arakanese counter moves made continuous rule impossible. Moghul power ended in 1664/5.

Of particular relevance is Mey's description of intra-community developments of political organization, i.e. tendencies towards centralisation among the valley tribes (see p.72 et passim). It is this interplay between intra-com-

munity processes, contact between tribespeople and Bengali settlers and the use (and abuse) of tribal chiefs and headmen by the British, Pakistani and Bangladeshi administrations which had a great impact on the internal distribution of power and legitimacy of wielders of power.

Apart from the Kaptai project also described by Almut May (pp.280-287) Wolfgang Mey discusses two major Bengali development projects, the "Pilot Scheme for Control of Jhuming" and the "Standard Horticultural Holdings Program". In conclusion, it can be shown that both schemes followed a colonial approach in that they showed a lack of knowledge about the area and, more particularly, consideration of the aspirations of the tribespeople who were most affected by these schemes. The profit was, however, very limited. The influx of Bengali settlers is the most important parameter in the development of the tracts and it is this development combined with an expansion of the infrastructure which appears to determine the future of the tracts. As a consequence, tensions and increasing violations of human rights of the tribespeople are reported by W.Mey (pp.222-225). For him the main question remains whether Bengali settlers and administration will be successful in establishing complete domination over the tribespeople, thus making any autochthonous development impossible. There is no doubt that complete isolation for the tribespeople is both impossible and cannot be considered to be profitable for them. But now that central influence has taken root in the CHT, it is not yet possible to see any social forces united and strong enough to counter increasing encroachment on land, control of trade and the power of Bengali administration. In this connection, Mey's critical discussion of the works of other CHT experts, e.g. Sopher, Bernot and Lehmann, is of great value for understanding the problems and dangers involved in an inadequate conceptualization of the relationship between the hill tribespeoples and those in the valleys (pp.226-246).

Both books are very attractive, giving a unique insight into the life, expectations and problems encountered by non-dominant ethnic minorities in Bangladesh by highlighting not only life-style and change of life-style of the indigenous population in reaction to various intruding outside groups, but by addressing also the more difficult and complex question of intra- and inter-ethnic power formation and distribution.

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