

CHRISTOPH JENTSCH/RAINER LOOSE: *Zur Geographie der ländlichen Siedlungen in Afghanistan*. (Mannheimer Geographische Arbeiten, Bd. 6). Mannheim: Selbstverlag des Geographischen Instituts der Universität, 1980. 119 pp.

Although publications on Afghan geography in the last 15 years have gone a long way in filling our gaps of knowledge in this area, geographers will nonetheless welcome the latest publication of the University of Mannheim's Geographic Institute, *Zur Geographie der ländlichen Siedlungen in Afghanistan*. In addition to providing information on the still-neglected area of rural settlements, this publication lends itself to comparisons with similar studies done in other Oriental countries.

The slim volume, containing two articles on rural settlements by Christoph Jentsch and Rainer Loose, is based on research carried out by both authors in 1975; further studies were prevented by the outbreak of the Saur Revolution in 1978.

In his article Jentsch surveys the distribution of rural settlements, as well as their size and layouts. Using this information as a basis, he attempts to establish a classification system for rural houses and their building materials.

Loose attempts in his article to explain the contradictory division of fields into regularly formed stripes and irregularly shaped amorph allotments. Loose maintains stripe allotments coincide with several waves of advancement of Pashtun tribes from the south and southeast and their final settlement. These waves, often encouraged by Afghan rulers, represent a direct takeover of agricultural land and constitute a process of inner colonisation.

Of special value are the many photos that support the contents of each article. In addition, English summaries are provided at the end of each contribution. Finally, enclosed maps show the physical geography, size of settlements, forms of rural settlement elements and altitudes of permanent settlements.

Linda Feldman

DIETRICH KÜHNE: *Malaysia. Tropenland im Widerspiel von Mensch und Natur*. (Klett Länderprofile). Stuttgart: Ernst Klett-Verlag, 1980. 187 pp., DM 25.-

In recent years regional geography has regained favour in the Federal Republic. Accordingly, Klett-Verlag has started a new series, "Länderprofile" - country profiles. Thus far, eight volumes have appeared, three of which deal with Asian countries: Indonesia, the People's Republic of China and Malaysia. Dietrich

Kühne's volume on Malaysia is a consistent, self-contained, well-balanced study. The author's comprehensive knowledge of the country's geography, history and ethno-sociology ensures that all sections of the book are of the same equally high standard.

The book contains three main sections: the country, the people, and the economy. A shorter, concluding section deals with the State's role in the infrastructure. 49 easily readable, clear and well-chosen graphs and maps support the text, and the publishers have thrown in the "Alexander" physical and economic map of South-East Asia for good measure.

In the first part, the country, the basic theme is the landscape economy. The author provides the most important data on physical geography, and on the basis of these proceeds to establish the natural potential and to discuss the problem of its commercial exploitation. The major problem in the relationship between man and nature - that of the ecosystem - is well developed. The author's profound knowledge of the country enables him to present a superbly balanced picture of the biocynoses and the ecosystems.

The second part deals with the early cultures and their people, the waves of Chinese and Indian immigration, the current problems of co-existence between the different ethnic groups, and the problems of load capacity in the urban and rural societies. Individual data are linked to groups of problems and presented in a clear - indeed, at times exciting - style.

The same applies to the third part, which deals with economic aspects. The co-existing or interwoven economic forms, sectors and types of production are each presented individually and in their reciprocal dependence: nomadic hunters, shifting forest clearance and cultivation, irrigation farming, plantation agriculture, mining, the services sector, handicrafts and manufacturing, foreign trade, and the gross national product. This section is similarly characterized by a factual approach and clarity.

The infrastructural activities of the State discussed in the fourth part include road construction, security, administration, and services as well as the clearing of new land - which is, of course, dependent upon the other measures. The author also draws objective comparisons between the deeds and omissions of the colonial period and post-colonial measures.

In summary one may quote the author. He was interested in "examining the internal laws underlying the different cultures and the associated ways of life, and thus showing under which conditions they function and under which they do not", and furthermore "in emphasizing the symbiosis between man and nature as expressed in harmoniously developed cultural landscapes - and vice versa: in showing up artificially induced disharmonies recognizable both in drastic despoliation of the landscape and in proven, precarious shifts in the ecological

balance, as well as in creating an awareness of the danger these hold for the real basis of existence". In respect to Malaysia the author has achieved his purpose admirably. In doing so he has created a modern and apposite approach to regional geography: one that is aware of the problems and prepared to tackle them directly in a fair and balanced manner.

Werner Rutz

BRUNHILD STAIGER (Hrsg.): China. Natur - Geschichte - Gesellschaft - Politik - Staat - Wirtschaft - Kultur. (Ländermonographien, Band 12, hrsg. vom Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart), Tübingen: Erdmann, 1980. XI + 519 pp.

Thirteen authors contributed to the volume, almost the entire academic staff of Hamburg's Institut für Asienkunde. The subject is dealt with in seven blocs. Besides a historical introduction and relevant general information the main emphasis was laid on the People's Republic. The contents include:

- geography, climate, soil, vegetation, natural resources;
- history from the Shang Dynasty to the Republic of China;
- society, religion, national minorities, social security;
- political development since 1949, foreign policy;
- the state, Maoism, constitution and state organs, legal affairs, military affairs;
- economics, problems of development, agriculture, energy, transport and communications, industry, political line and participation, domestic and foreign trade.
- culture, media, language, education, science and technology, literature, contemporary painting, cultural heritage.

The book has an appendix, a bibliography arranged by subjects, a chronology, a table with provinces and their capitals in pinyin and the traditional, more familiar transcription, data on the Chinese economy for the years 1977 and 1978 and an index of persons and subjects. Some chapters include tables (e.g. on national minorities and the economy) and maps (on geographical setting). The book contains 64 illustrations and photos (of mixed quality), and has a map of the People's Republic (Inner Mongolia is shown with the boundaries set during the Cultural Revolution; however, this autonomous region was restored to its former size on July 1st, 1979).

The concept is clear and the well-structured articles rich in information. Essential factors are correctly stressed, and interesting details not neglected.