

The last chapter sums up the development of the townships. The non-state industrial sector also has some negative aspects. Sometimes also work conditions are poor. "In the countryside there is no state ownership worth talking about ... At the same time economic malpractices (*Wildwuchs*) emerge, expressed by the reappearance of usury, child labour and economic exploitation of the employees in the private sector." (p. 414)

The research work of the authors, collection and analysis of comprehensive data and the perusal of relevant research by others, is impressive. But a few critical remarks may be made.

The issues and development problems of the farming sector are largely ignored. Where they are mentioned, figures sometimes seem doubtful: E.g. a yield of corn of 195 tons/hectare (p. 343) or the high transfer of farmland for industrial purposes ("nine times as much as really necessary", p. 167). The same can be said about the balance-sheets of industrial enterprises (p. 148/149).

The discussion about social fallow, the neglect of farmland by landholders, is contradictory. On page 42 it is "a frequent phenomenon in the coastal regions", this is repeated on page 379 and 411. On page 89 these acreages are cultivated largely by non-resident agriculturists. Under the household responsibility system every landholder has to deliver a quota of grain; it is, therefore, difficult to imagine how holders can leave their plots fallow and still deliver their grain quota.

Generally the translation of figures seems to be a problem. Thus, a second-hand Mercedes, bought by a party secretary, probably did not really cost one million Yuan (= 208,000 DM) (p. 332).

The political interpretation of facts is subjective and therefore open to controversy. Sometimes there are contradictions in the statements made by the authors, which may reflect the complex reality of this vast country. The authors seem to incline to an open perspective for China's stable development. With the interruption of June 1989, the years from 1978 to 1999 have been years of economic progress, social and political stability. All incidents of unrest, demonstrations, rebellions are now officially reported (p.374), mostly handled cautiously and the reasons for the grievances analysed and remedies offered. After the crash of the small Asian tigers China appears as the stable factor in the region. Only history can give the answer about China's future path, whether the CP will retain power by success and flexibility or not.

Theodor Bergmann

R.F. WATTERS, T.G. MCGEE (eds.), *Asia Pacific. New Geographies of the Pacific Rim*. London: Hurst & Company, 1997. XXI, 362 pages, 36 tables, 30 figures, £ 15.95. ISBN 1-85065-320-6

Finally, after a "new sociology", a "new archaeology", "new geopolitics" – now also "new geographies"?

From the sub-title the reader could imagine that a new scientific concept of the geographical discipline will be presented – exemplified by Asia Pacific. Soon, however, he will notice that this is not the case, rather will he find a multi-disciplinary

publication of 21 papers (including "Introduction" and "Conclusion") whose contributors are mostly geographers, but also anthropologists, economists and political scientists, all with long-time experience in the area now known as "The Pacific Rim". So, what is really new? The "newness" to which the editors refer is restricted to the *dynamics* in many fields initiated by globalisation in Asia Pacific. To demonstrate this "newness" the editors sub-divide the volume into four parts: 1. Globalisation and Emergence of Sub-global Regions (pp. 13-77), 2. Processes of Change (pp. 78-160), 3. National Responses to Globalisation (pp. 161-249), 4. Sites of Resistance, Negotiation and Capitulation (pp. 250-353).

During the last 20 years the "Pacific Rim" has been characterized by an increasing economic, social, cultural and political interdependence. We are living in a world of flows and intensities based upon an "informational revolution", developing partly alongside, partly against the geopolitical codes of spatial sovereignty. This period of internationalisation or globalisation leads to a world of greater "connexity". Along with the growing discussion on the effects of globalisation is a remarkable trend in policy to focus on the regional level. Though regions are no longer regarded as closed fortresses but as sites of many intersecting processes ("network landscapes"), they are nevertheless regarded as a means of obtaining some degree of local insight and also control over global forces.

The Pacific is regarded as "the ocean of the future" with many changes taking place. Since the 70s the GDP of its surrounding countries grew faster than that of any other world areas. Increased trade, communication, investments and population movements are obvious, which implies further integration between the countries or regions around the Pacific Basin. The easy diffusion of modern technology causes not only positive spill-over effects. Economic activities are highly concentrated upon mega-cities. The combination of a rapid increase in the urban population and industrial growth has resulted in more pollution and accelerated deterioration of the environmental and living conditions.

On the other hand, rural regions which, until recently, were regarded as backward, are infiltrated by modern developments. As the peasants' productivity was only half or even less that of the workers in other economic sectors, self-sufficiency has been replaced by cash-crop agriculture. At the same time, the development of simple labour-intensive industries has had significant implications for the employment structure as it opens up opportunities for surplus rural labourers, immigrants and women. As formerly isolated groups living on the periphery are drawn into the economic transformation, they are made more aware of the modern tendencies outside of their traditional environs.

The expansion of Asian industrialisation has made demands for raw materials on many countries of the Pacific Rim. The main difficulties they face is less a lack of resources than the problem of how to control resource extraction, to prevent environmental damage and to get a just share of the commodities sold, because joint ventures more often than not are highly favourable to foreign companies. Here we come across the reasons for resistance to globalisation.

Without any doubt, the integration of countries in the form of political and diplomatic co-operation such as ASEAN or economic linkages like the SIJORI growth triangle have contributed to the political stability of the area. As a result, trans-

nationalisation was likely to become even more widespread in Asia Pacific until the economic crisis erupted in 1997. From this time onward a growing regionwide hostility to open markets can be discerned.

As illustrated by those few points, the papers present a host of different regional and thematic aspects and interesting insights into the "dynamics" of Asia Pacific. The volume can be recommended to anyone looking for information prior to the area's socio-economic crises.

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**Local Associations and Municipal Government
in Thailand**

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The study operates with a three-fold-concept of local autonomy. It sees municipal government as being integrated into a network of communication flows and societal interactions. The more such interlinkages with governmental and non-statal entities exist, the greater the scope of action of the municipal government vis-à-vis the central state.

Local voluntary associations, interest groups and other intermediary organizations thus play a vital role as regards municipal autonomy and local political participation. Based on a survey of 61 local associations the authors examine the linkages between the municipal government and local associations in the Thai cities of Chiang Mai and Nakhon Sawan. The findings show that local associations contribute to an improvement or service deliveries, and increase the financial capacities of local governments, but, except for a few NGOs, do not provide them with much additional know-how or informational inputs - thus only moderately extending local autonomy. As two case studies in Chiang Mai show, some of the local associations do, however, contribute to a considerable broadening of political participation, thereby supporting the ongoing transformation of the Thai polity from a "bureaucratic" to a "bourgeois" polity at the local level.

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