

sion, makes sacrifice in terms of a loss of logical coherence or precision. However, the problem concerning the definition of CARLs is of minor importance for the actual work of making decisions on concrete development strategies.

The second problem with the book is that its discussion of the roles of a government is very limited, with the consequence that it virtually neglects the very active roles the governments of East Asia have played in accelerating the development of their economies. Similarly problematic is its failure to assess the role of credit, as it only warns against the drawbacks of subsidized credit, despite the fact that recent growth in the use of micro-credit seems to point to the potential viability and effectiveness of policies for offering low-interest credit as a means of countering poverty in agrarian economies.

The shortcomings pointed out above are rather minor compared to the splendid net value of this book. Building on their forty years of research findings, the authors convincingly describe what desirable development strategies ought to be like. The book is definitely worth reading for students of development economics and practitioners engaged in development policies; or rather, it is essential reading for such people. (Yoichi Izumida)

*Vietnam's Rural Transformation* edited by Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet and Doug J. Porter, Boulder, Colo., Westview Press/ Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1995, xiv + 251 pp.

More than ten years have passed since the Socialist Republic of Vietnam instituted its *doi moi* (renovation) policy and began its process of economic liberalization. Citing the case of China, economists became interested in these events as a "period of transition" from a socialist economy to a more liberalized one. However, focusing merely on such phenomena in the industrial sector as the urban construction boom and increased foreign investment will not allow one to fully understand the effects of *doi moi* within the Vietnamese economy as a whole, since 80 per cent of the country's population of 70 million lives outside the industrial sector in rural agrarian regions. The authors of this well-balanced collection of papers, which was originally presented at the Vietnam Update Conference held at the Australian National University in 1993, are fully aware of this fact. They attempt to view the political, economic, and social aspects of problems that have arisen together with the sweeping changes that have occurred in rural Vietnam since the adoption of the *doi moi* line and to investigate them on the various levels of region, village/commune, and rural household. One consistent theme running through the entire volume is change in rural society and the role played by the state.

Another characteristic of this volume is the abundant use of field surveys and statistical data in order to clarify regional and agrarian conditions in Vietnam heretofore unknown to scholars active outside of the country. Not content with relying merely on information made available in legislative commentaries and government publications, the contributors

to this volume have incorporated a tremendous amount of data from interviews and field surveys carried out by both foreign and Vietnamese researchers in rural areas. In this respect, the research contained therein is nothing short of epoch-making.

Due to the merits of such an investigative methodology, the reader is given a most interesting introduction to such social phenomena that occurred in the Vietnamese villages between the late 1980s and early 1990s as the transformation, and in some cases breakup, of the cooperative, the decentralization of regional society, the intensification of land-related disputes, growing regional differences, a widening gap between the rich and poor, lively reciprocity, and the revival of religion and traditional custom.

Chapter 1, entitled "Rural Vietnam in Rural Asia" and written by the editors, compares the present situation in Vietnamese agriculture with that of China and the various countries of Southeast Asia. As a result of the tumultuous change that has occurred during the past ten years, Vietnamese agriculture has come to possess agrarian arrangements common to the other countries in the region. In other words, the main unit of management within the agricultural system has become the "farm household" (instead of the cooperative); the "market" has now taken over for the state in determining the distribution of resources; and public services have been cut back. And so, the authors warn, Vietnam will no doubt lose its unique character that has stressed equality in agriculture and finally become a developing country with the "usual" agricultural problems accompanying that particular economic status. (According to the authors, however, in contrast to the countries of Southeast Asia where private enterprises [recently co-operatives as well] take on the role of middlemen offering various services to cultivators involved in commercialized agriculture, in Vietnam this role is played by the cooperatives that have managed to survive.) While recognizing the need for economic growth, the authors again question (1) exactly what is the real aim of the Socialist Republic's economic liberalization policies aimed at local governments and cultivators, and (2) whether local governments, communes, and cooperatives possess the ability to solve the various problems that have arisen in the midst of economic reform.

Important changes have occurred in the workings of political power in Vietnam in relation to the agrarian question. Chapter 2, "Mono-Organizational Socialism and the State" by Carlyle A. Thayer, discusses this point, arguing that the Vietnamese state was not able to utilize force either in dealing with peasants in the south who refused to follow its national policy of collectivization or in response to the United Buddhist Church which opposed government intervention in religious affairs. For the author, this fact proves that Vietnam is not (in the words of Joel S. Migdal) a "strong state," that is, a monolith capable of mobilizing its people for the purpose of realizing national goals. Although at the present stage the path toward multi-party politics remains closed and the many social organizations formed since the implementation of *doi moi* in 1986 belong to the Fatherland Front controlled by the Vietnam Communist Party, both the charismatic force of the ideas of Ho Chi Minh and the VCP's authority have weakened, as economic legitimization for growth for its own sake widens in scope. Policy making in Vietnam is no longer conducted by a small elite within the VCP, but rather done at a number of levels, including the central government, National Assembly, mass organizations, provincial administration, and local people's committees. The author concludes that the state's decision makers must now take into consideration the demands and needs of the many forces that today make up Vietnamese society.

This point is also taken up in Chapter 3, "Rural Society and State Relations" by Kerkvliet, in relation to the government's administrative organs and the agrarian population. The demands made by cultivators toward administrative organs at both the central and local levels have in general forced the state to make huge compromises, and in particular brought about the contracted output system (called the "Contract 100 System") implemented in 1981 and the farm household contract system (called the "Contract 10 System") as outlined in Communist Party Resolution 10 enacted in 1988. The government responded directly to resistance on the part of cultivators by abandoning its comprehensive plan to institute a collective farming system. Later the government also responded to the many demands by cultivators that their land be returned to them by enacting the Revised Land Law of 1993, under which long-term land use rights twenty years in duration were given to individuals and households with written provisions granting freedom with respect to exchange, transfer, rent, inheritance, and mortgaging. In effect this law poses a threat to one of the most important successes of the revolution, the nationalization of land. Actually, the tendency toward "pluralism" ("in the sense of multiple sources of social, political, and economic practices beyond the reach of the state") at the village level has expanded, as many organizations have spontaneously sprouted up in response to the diversified needs of cultivators.

As reform takes effect, dissatisfaction among the agrarian population has arisen due not only to disputes over the distribution of land use rights, but also to the improper acquisition of communally owned village land and the embezzlement of public funds by cadres of communes and cooperatives. Chapter 3 introduces the kind of land-related disputes that repeatedly occurred from the late 1980s to 1993. He describes to the surprise of at least this reader acts of protest including incidents of villagers occupying local administrative offices, putting commune and cooperative cadres under lock and key, demanding that landownership rights enjoyed before the 1960s be restored, and even refusing to pay taxes. Kerkvliet has allowed us for the first time to understand the actual internal conditions that forced the Vietnamese government to implement the above-mentioned series of reform measures.

In its attempt to control such a volatile situation, the state decided that neither communes nor surviving cooperatives were able to solve frequently occurring land disputes, and the 1993 Land Law removed these organizations from the list of assignees to whom land use rights can be transferred. Moreover, the state removed these organizations from the list of agencies authorized to confer land use rights, thus limiting the authority to administrative levels from the district people's committees on up. The author relates that while village-level administrators are allowed to process applications from local cultivators concerning "exchange" of land use rights, "transfer" of such rights was put under the authorities at the district level.

In the eyes of this reviewer, the formation and breakup of Vietnam's cooperatives will be an important topic of research for historians in the future. Recently, scholars have been discussing these cooperatives in connection with the ideas fostered by the traditional state system that existed in Vietnam prior to French colonization. In any case, further clarification of the actual situation surrounding these associations will no doubt deepen our understanding of both Vietnamese socialism and the true character of the Vietnamese state.

The political situation described in Chapters 2 and 3, however, does not necessarily imply degeneration of the VCP's control mechanism. Nonetheless, nowhere in the volume are we given concrete information about the political process related to decentralization and the breakup of cooperatives, in which regional governments and local parties must have been deeply involved.

Chapters 6 ("Aspects of Agricultural Economy and Rural Life in 1993" by Dang Phong) and 8 ("Changing Rural Institutions and Social Relations" by Tran Thi Van Anh and Nguyen Manh Huan) depict cases of successful agricultural promotion schemes implemented by local governments thanks to decentralization, whereas Chapter 9 ("Economic Liberalization, Marginality, and the Local State" by Doug J. Porter) takes up the case of Quang Nam Da Nang Province, in order to examine the competitive relationships among province, district, and village in connection with public utility projects implemented by the provincial government using independent revenue largely derived from state enterprises and trade taxes. The author implies that given the situation reflected by the power politics within the provincial people's committee over the allocation of budgetary funds, there is the clear possibility that the province's poorer socioeconomic strata will be further marginalized.

Several of the contributors to this volume have taken up the topics of agricultural policy and the increasing stratification between rich and poor, but seem to be in conflict both in their approaches and conclusions. In Chapter 4 ("The Economy and the Countryside: The Relevance of Rural Development Policies"), Adam Fforde and Steve Sènèque show that the transition in agricultural policy which began in 1988 took place upon a backdrop of reductions and cessation of aid from the Soviet Union. In other words, Vietnam's economic liberalization policy is made up of nothing but measures directed toward foreign countries by a government in need of investment from abroad for the purpose of industrialization. Due to a very limited national budget, village communities receive only insufficient allocations from the government, and they are expected to make do with self-generated revenue. On the other hand, the government's intervention in the rice trade has badly effected the movement of rice prices, and a competitive edge is almost nonexistent in state-run agriculture. In spite of the fact that regional differences in agricultural income have reached crisis proportions, no policy attempts have been made to alleviate the situation. The authors state that the government should take steps to overcome the problems of risk due to market competition and overindulgence in rent-seeking, and actively grapple with such issues as infrastructure building, the establishment of a system of rural credit, and maximization of the utility of existing peasant organizations.

In contrast, Chapter 5 ("The Peasant Household Economy and Social Change" by Dao The Tuan) utilizes the 1990 census and large-scale publicly funded surveys carried out in 1988, 1990, and 1992 to introduce in a rather optimistic manner how economic reform has influenced the agrarian population. The author argues that on the whole average income increased, that socioeconomic stratification may be unavoidable in the process of economic development, and that the impact of new land policy is not clear at this stage. He states that the government's policy has been directed at supporting self-help activities carried on by agrarian communities.

On the other hand, in relation to the stratification of the rural population, Chapter 6,

which is based on farm management surveys done in 1993 in the Red River Delta and Mekong Delta provinces by a group of researchers including the chapter's author, Dang Phong, cites examples of commune and cooperative cadre in the Mekong Delta taking improper advantage of their social position and special privileges to obtain large tracts of land. Also introduced are cases of subcontractors owning agricultural equipment and irrigation pumps personally hiring wage labor to carry out the work. The author argues that these are negative effects of economic reform from the viewpoint of equality under socialism.

The problem that this reviewer would like to raise here, however, is not the divergence of views expressed by the authors of the above three chapters, but rather their tendency toward broad generalization. Since maximum efficiency in agricultural production differs on a region-by-region basis, any opinion concerning such aspects as agrarian policy and socioeconomic stratification should be expressed while keeping in mind alternatives best suited to specific regional characteristics. It is in this respect that Vo-Tong Xuan's Chapter 7, "Rice Production, Agricultural Research, and the Environment," is meaningful for its discussion carried out in more realistic, down to earth terms. The agriculture of Vietnam's two major delta regions is significantly different. Chapter 7 explains very coherently the beginning and end of collectivization in the Mekong Delta and the reforms that followed. It also sheds light upon how the delta's natural environment was influenced by the government's previous promotion of land reclamation and self-sustaining production. Finally, the author stresses the necessity of policy directed at developing rice production adapted to the delta's topography and more effort in diversifying farm products in order to put a stop to declining agricultural income in the region.

In the findings of this reviewer, who has since 1994 been making yearly historical surveys of Mekong Delta agriculture, it is power struggles among political elites that have for the past hundred years negated the efforts of cultivators to open up the delta to agriculture. At present the delta is characterized by two extremes: overpopulated areas and labor-scarce reclamation settlements. Throughout Vietnam's history, the government has never been successful in efficiently employing the country's forces of production. Moreover, "development proposals" continue to be made without sufficient knowledge of the reasons for this failure. On the other hand, in periods of political and economic turbulence it is inevitably the weaker members of society who are destined to suffer the most. Chapter 9 is a case study of ill-fated people in the new economic zones of Baria-Vung Tau Province, and Chapter 8 deals with women and minorities in rural Vietnam. It is in the interest of these weaker socioeconomic groups that a state should hold to the principles of socialism and its administrative organs be positively involved in creating policies that promote rural development. It is the hope of this reviewer that *Vietnam's Rural Transformation* will become a volume of research contributing much to the furtherance of such a cause and a persuasive argument for the international community to lend support to it. (Yōko Takada)