

MANNING NASH, *The Golden Road to Modernity, Village Life in Contemporary Burma*, New York, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1965, viii + 333 pp.

The book consists of an analysis of village life in two contemporary Burmese villages, Nondwin and Yadaw. Nondwin lies 40 road miles SW of Mandalay and grows a crop mixture of paddy, beans, sesamum, cotton, maize, sorghum, bananas, mangoes, and onions. There is little crop failure and the households are divided into 33 rich, 33 moderate, and 26 poor households. Yadaw is situated 7 miles south of Mandalay on the main highway to Rangoon and is concerned totally with growing wet rice. The households in the village are divided into *lugyi* (those with discretionary income) 6, sufficient 30, and poor 87. The author provides information about these two villages in terms of village budgets for the three classes of farmers, about technology and technological innovation, about the economic returns from different classes of farming, about the social family and household organization, about the political organization at the local level and about the organization of the religious life.

The purpose of the author is not, however, to provide merely a detailed ethnographic survey of two representative villages in modern Burma. He is concerned rather with trying to show the range of choice open to the villager in terms of the cultural and social background. He thus carefully refrains from trying to classify the family, economic, and political system in terms of a preconceived group of categories. A representative quotation to show his method is on p.246.

"The presence of three major types of family organization should not cloud the basic underlying social dynamic of Burmese family life. The aim and ideal of founding a family is to set up a nuclear household in one's own compound. The existence of varieties in actual family structure and composition is, of course, conditioned by the accidents of birth, death, and other demographic fluctuation, the state of economic well-being, and, most importantly, by the rhythms of the domestic cycle in the independent establishment of a compound."

The author's analysis thus avoids many of the pitfalls which have dogged the study of family sociology in Japan. The author's family classification is thus *subordinate* to the factors above and there is no attempt to classify *per se*. The family system is thus the method by which the members of the household make a choice. This choice may be a choice made in terms of real possibilities (albeit unconscious) but it must be a choice made in terms of the theories of the villagers themselves.

In order to illustrate the theories of the villagers, the author has paid a great deal of attention to various Burmese technical words. These words are of great interest and I should like to illustrate some of them (p.106).

*Kan* is “the bundle of ideas tied in with destiny, fate, luck, and life chances . . . . A person’s *kan* is strengthened by adding *kutho* and weakened by accumulating *akutho*.” (reviewer’s italic) In the commentary the author starts off by unqualifiedly asserting “*Kan* is the product of individual effort . . . .” Then follows several pages of description of the *place* of a theory of *kan* in actual village belief and what exactly *kutho* and *akutho* is in terms of behaviour. The general question of the place of Buddhist theory in developing or preventing economic development follows naturally on (p. 161).

Another group of technical terms are as follows (p. 76) :

“The village Burman has a trinity of concepts about personal power, and these ideas are the key to understanding the political organization . . . . Three concepts *pon*, *gon*, and *awza* define relations of power, influence, and authority among the villagers. *Pon*, in its secular meaning, is the power to carry out plans, to bend others to one’s will, to move destiny to one’s advantage. If a person has *pon*, as a corollary he necessarily has *awza*. *Awza* is the authority to command. Officials have *awza*, but this authority rests in law and must be backed by the coercive authority of the police and courts. The *awza* of a man with *pon* stems from his personal powers, his marked and conspicuous abilities to succeed in this world. The notion of *gon* is akin to the English idea of virtue. It connotes a sterling personal character, special religious learning or piety, or even the trace of impartiality in dispute. *Pon* and *awza* are the power dimensions of social relations; *gon* is the moral content.” (reviewer’s italic)

Then follows several pages of detailing the actual significance of these terms in behaviour. These are only a few of the many terms which the author has selected and in every case the author is trying to show the nature of the choice involved.

This approach is an extremely worth-while one in understanding the Burmese villager. It can also be useful in comparing the Burmese villager with, say, the Japanese one at a higher level of analysis than would be possible by just comparing the economic or social behaviour. On p. 268 he deals with the question of decision-making in village life. He states that in public discussions there is an “unwillingness to cause any inconvenience to another and a reluctance to clear the air by speaking out” in situations in which villagers of even slightly disparate status meet each other in a public meeting. This of course is a feature not only of Burmese but also of Japanese society. However, the author explains this in terms not of status conflict but by stating it in terms of a feeling of *nade*, a kind of feeling arising from status nonsymmetry in which the junior or weaker is constrained from direct confrontation with the superior by the operation of sentiments like shame, delicacy, and surrender. In other words, the problem of decision-making can be analysed in terms of concepts which may be simplified into some such generalization as the following: When a conflict between two individuals occurs, public

opposition can be avoided by the pseudo-psychological device of the *nade*. An absence of a feeling of *nade* implies an absence of opposition on the issue under discussion.

If I may conclude by criticizing the author, I should like to state that in spite of the interesting theory he has propounded, he has completely failed to illustrate it with sufficient actual case studies. What has always interested me very much in the study of Japanese society is the numerous cases in which Japanese do *not* behave in a stereotyped fashion according to the theory that those higher in a hierarchy completely control their juniors. Japanese progressive industrial management is filled with examples of junior members of the industrial hierarchy taking fundamental decisions sometimes without reference to their superiors. My personal opinion is that once one has entered a Japanese business firm, the level of management about five years after graduation has a much greater degree of responsibility than in an equivalent Western firm. It seems almost as though once the individual in the hierarchy accepts the principles of Japanese business, he is free to do what he wishes provided he does not openly try to overthrow the system. The formal system and the actual behaviour are a long way removed from each other. This is the fundamental criticism against such foreigners as Benedict or Abegglen. They mistook the form of Japanese society for the behaviour of its members.

Although I have never worked in Burma, I deeply suspect that the Burmese are not so dissimilar from the Japanese insofar as they will always *explain* their behaviour in terms of concepts such as *kan* (in Burma) or *on* or *giri* (in Japan) but in fact behave in accordance with the actual situation. It is thus very important for any anthropologist or sociologist working in Burma or Japan to give numerous examples where the same principles operating in a different (or even the same) situation may have a different conclusion. Hardly a single example of actual behaviour is given by the author, so that the whole book appears much more tidy than, I suspect, the Burmese really are. (*William Newell*)

V. V. BALABUSHEVICH & A. M. DYAKOV eds., *A Contemporary History of India*, New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1964, viii+585 pp.

This study stands as a brief history of, or an introduction to, contemporary India worked out by the outstanding India study group in the USSR. The historical stage dealt with in this book covers a time-span of about 35 years, starting from the end of World War I and extending to 1955, by which time India had been independent for some time. The main emphasis of the analysis is put on the political aspect of Indian history with the economic development during the same period as a foreground, or, more concretely, on the co-relationships between the national independence movement led by the