

With a few exceptions the legislation contained in the collection is limited to laws specifically related to foreign economic affairs. Those doing business inside the PRC will need to know in addition a large number of purely domestic laws dealing with their field of activity.⁶ Still, the present collection, in its handy format, will be a welcome reference book for practitioners and academics alike.

Wolfgang Kessler

Eva K. Dargyay

Tibetan village communities – structure and change

Aris & Phillips LTD, Warminster England, 1982, 110 S., £ 12.50

The traditional Tibetan societal structure and its forced collapse is the topic of this monograph. In its central part it sets out on a meticulous and arduous task of reconstructing the societal structure of three »villages« of a valley in the Gyantse district, and therefrom of the whole of Tibet.

Since, nowadays, it is quite impossible to conduct a detailed and penetrating field research in Tibet, the author was forced to collect her information by an analysis of the accounts of a few other writers and by interviewing refugees from Tibet, now living in India and Switzerland. The research methods are based on intensive interview techniques and upon an anthropological approach. In order to conceive the whole system, Dargyay selected one specific area, a »Hundred-County«, which, traditionally, was the smallest administrative unit in Tibet. Interviewing especially refugees from this area, she collected first hand, though memory based, information of pre-invasion times. Showing the relevance of this local information within, and for, a broader cultural context, she attempts to draw a picture of the entire state and society of Tibet.

After a short account of the »Environment« of the »Hundred-County«, which includes housing and living conditions in general, the more general principles of societal stratification are described. Three basic groups of subjects, a. of the central government, b. of the state monasteries and c. of the nobility form the main groups of the rural area, each having specific rights and obligations, various degrees of tributary dependence and personal freedom. Later on, she shows that this basically feudal society has to be seen as a quite complex and differentiated system of socio-economic strata.

The family structure is closely associated with the overall socio-economic system, extended families and nuclear families living side by side. Residence rules, roles and ranks, functions, norms and values of families and of other face to face groups are described. This is followed by an account of the rural economic system, which varies according to the social position of the subjects. Lastly, the internal political structure of the »Hundred-County« is presented.

6 Cf. Nee/Chu/Moser (n.2, supra) and Münzel (ibid).

In a concluding chapter, the radical change of the traditional social structure, following the intrusion of the Chinese, is treated, and difficulties in assessing the changes and their consequences are shown. Within the Chinese system, not very much of the old culture and socio-economic structure seems to have survived.

The author gives a very detailed and interesting insight into the traditional system. The internal structure of the presentation makes it difficult, though, to grasp the interdependence of different aspects of the societal system. The description of the economy after having gone into the political and social structure, which actually seems to depend very much upon the economic system, appears to be a little misplaced. Only after reading this chapter do many things previously analysed become clear.

Mingling different levels of description, »Hundred-County« – Tibet, or own information and literature analysis is sometimes confusing. It also remains unclear why, for example, the »Environment« (Chap. III) included a description of houses, water supply, and fuel, while foodstuffs and other essential goods are presented in the »Economy« (Chap. VII) after presenting the economic activities according to degrees of socio-political dependence and economic duties. The same happens with the political structure of the »County« (Chap. VIII) following sub-chapter »Political Power« within »Dominance and Dependence« (Chap. III), or »Property and Power« within »Economy« (Chap. VII).

Maybe there is some logic behind this, but it does not become clear to the reader. Either a short presentation of the internal logic of the study at the beginning, or a more precise »Table of Contents« including not only the main chapters, might have helped. Sometimes the short titles of the chapters rather obscure the content of a chapter. This also applies to the title of this monograph »Tibetan Village Communities« which is not very precise, as the study attempts to describe the structure of a wide societal system. By using the term »community« it is further suggested that there was a »communal whole« (Gemeinschaft) which was not actually discussed. In fact a feudal rural system (Gesellschaft) was described.

Bearing in mind these structural problems of the monograph, the reader will surely find this a very worthwhile sensitively and interestingly written book, given some insights into a culture which soon will be destroyed forever.

Dietmar Herbon