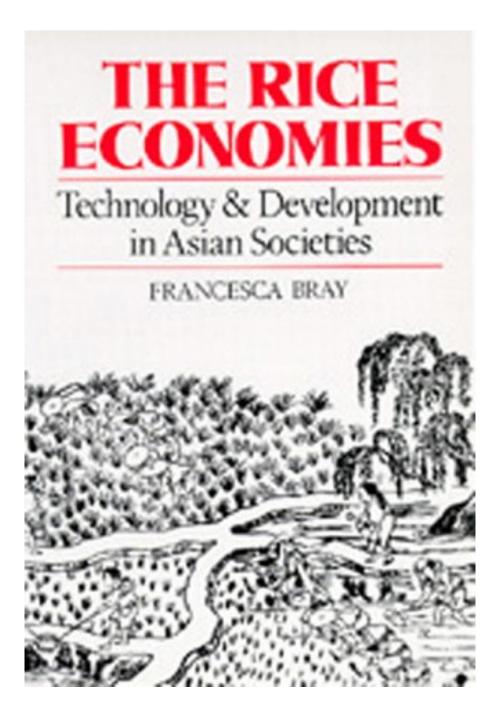


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#### Review

"This is a magnificent book, which deserves special praise for having achieved a truly exemplary balance between scholarly and practical significance."--Paul Richards, "New Scientist

#### From the Back Cover

Wide-ranging both historically and geographically, The Rice Economies brilliantly addresses a subject of abiding interest to anthropologists, economists, and historians as well as those concerned with development issues and Asian studies. It is the first work to formulate a logical, historical dynamic of development in Asia's rice economies up to the present day. The comparison of mechanized Western farming methods with the more labor intensive, less environmentally destructive Asian methods is of value to environmentalists and economists concerned with the need for sustainable development. In a new preface, the author reflects upon the increasing relevance of the concerns of the book to international environmental issues.

#### About the Author

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The contrast in the rate of growth between Western and Eastern societies since 1800 has caused Asian societies to be characterized as backward and resistant to change, though until 1600 or so certain Asian states were technologically far in advance of Europe. The Rice Economies, drawing on original source materials, examines patterns of technological and social evolution specific to East-Asian wet-rice economies in order to clarify some general historical trends in economic development.

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2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Can be used in japan to dispell Japanese myths By Timothy Takemoto Here in Japan every one at school is taught that

1) The Japanese were agrarians that learnt to cooperate with each other, and thereby became collectivists

2) The Europeans were axe weilding hunter gatherers that retain their individualism.

Whatever you think of the outcome, the picture is simplicitc. This book helps by giving another point of view.

Francesca Bray (friendly - She answered my email) is looking for the origin of the industrial revolution in the types of agriculture that existed in Europe and Asia. The basic idea seems to be that

1) In "Rice economies" one can grow crops on the same land over and over again, if one tends ones paddie field over and over again. In this situation, other than the need for irrigation (which Dr. Bray does not emphasise so much), rice farmers are quite indpendent, autonomous, expert tenders of their paddy field.

1) In Europe the need for crop rotation (cow, fallow, wheat, cow, fallow wheat) meant that there were inherently different skills (cow heards, wheat harvesters) and this allowed for divisions of labour and economies of scale, that lead to the industrial revolution.

Points to note

At the time that Dr. Bray is refering to, the West is also very agrarian.

The Western style of agriculture is even more cooperative than that of the Japanese, since the cow-herd and the wheat shearer depended upon each other and their cooperation in a large whole. The Japanese paddy field farmer does most things him/herself.

The Westerners become more "unique" in that each has their own skill, whereas the Japanese become more alike.

One could say therefore that Dr. Bray's book does come out in favour of a homogenous and in that sense collectivist society. In any event, it compares the social structure and economics of European and Asian societies effectively from a comparison of their agriculture. So it can be used perhaps to dispell the legacy of the axe weilding aryan hordes. All in all a very interesting book that deserves more press.

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This book is an excellent source on East and Southeast Asian rice agriculture. It is clearly written and understandable. A vital resource for both specialists, non-specialists, and students alike. The preface is outstanding, presenting an intelligent and elegant critique of the dominant paradigm in agricultural development studies. Most importantly it confronts head on the ethnocentric racist theories employed by most western scientists and economists, especially those promoting the not so successful "Green Revolution". Dr. Bray is a brilliant scholar and anyone interested in agriculture, agriculture economics, or development should have a copy of this book in their personal library.

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