

Book Review

Proceedings of Symposium on Paddy Soils.

Institute of Soil Science, Academia Sinica, Beijing, The Peoples Republic of China, 1981. 317 Figs., 445 Tables, IX 864 pages.

More than four thousand years ago, during the Yao Dynasty, engineer Yu classified Chinese soils according to their colour and structure, or so the legend has it. Yu must have dealt with paddy soils on many occasions, because rice was known to be cultivated already for at least a thousand years before his time. Modern soil science, however, did not make its entry into China until the early nineteen thirties through visits by American soil scientists, such as Professor Emeritus James Thorp, who is still going very strong, and who attended the Symposium on Paddy Soils, held in Nanjing in October, 1980.

Between these visits in the thirties and this Symposium lies a long period of seclusion, virtually isolating China scientifically from the West. In addition, the cultural revolution made scientific endeavours nay impossible. The hiatus thus created was felt by all, and certainly by the Chinese soil scientists, who are confronted with the problems of feeding a population that recently reached the one billion mark.

A strong desire by these scientists to interact as intensely as possible with soil scientists from the rest of the world resulted in the holding of the Symposium on Paddy Soils, of which this book forms the Proceedings.

The fact that rice was made the focal point is no surprise, considering that in China about 26 million hectares are devoted to this crop; in 1978 China produced about one third of the world rice output.

Three quarters of the 130 papers come from the Chinese themselves, and this work can therefore be seen as an expression of the state-of-the-art of paddy soil science in China. As such, this book is a golden opportunity for any soil scientist who is interested in paddy soils, but who is not able to read publications written in Chinese. This applies to some extent also to publications written in Japanese: many prominent Japanese soil scientists participated in the Symposium and have papers in the Proceedings.

The overall quality of the contributions suggests that, in spite of long isolation and unimaginable problems, the Chinese soil scientists managed somehow or other to keep up with the major scientific developments in the West. But more importantly, it is for the first time that scientists outside China are given a comprehensive overview of the scientific developments related to genesis, classification, physics, chemistry, and management of rice soils in China.

The Symposium, and therefore the Proceedings, consisted of Plenary, Sectional and Poster sessions.

The Plenary Session (15 papers, 230 pages) can be seen as a text book on paddy soils written by internationally recognized soil scientists, with additional information, specifically related to China, on oxidation-reduction properties, genetic classification, fertility and fertilizer use, green manuring, and cropping systems. This part of the book alone would already make this book worth buying!

The Sectional part of the Proceedings consists of Section 1, Properties (23 papers, 156 pages), Section 2, Genesis and Classification (20 papers, 110 pages), and Section 3, Management (23 papers, 191 pages).

The part on the Poster Session (29 papers, 167 pages) covers a wide variety of topics such as soil structure, physico-chemical properties, dinitrogen fixation, genetic, geochemical and anthropogenic soil characteristics, cropping systems, plant nutrition and fertilizer responses, micro-nutrients, and pollution.

The Organizing Committee must have selected the participants of the Symposium with great care, because virtually all papers are of high scientific standard.

Most aspects, even remotely related to paddy soils, are well covered, but surprisingly there is only one paper on phosphate, dealing only with a P balance of a reclaimed soil.

This 864-page book was edited by a Board consisting entirely of Chinese scientists. Considering this, the size of the book, and the speed at which it was published, the Board is to be congratulated for the high editorial quality. All Tables are set out in a uniform format;

occasional discrepancies in the English language do not distract from the main theme of the papers.

I can strongly recommend this book to any student or scientist interested in paddy soils. For those that are specifically interested in Chinese soil science, this book is a must, at any price.

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Book Review

Gupta, I. C., Pahwa, K. N.: International Research on Saline Irrigation Waters. An Annotated Bibliography 1950–1980: Agricole Publishing Co., New Delhi, India. 1981 XVI. 394 pages. With the expansion of irrigated agriculture throughout the semiarid regions of the world, good quality water is rapidly becoming a scarce and precious commodity. As a result, there is an increasing interest in the use of brackish and even sea water for crop production. The use of brackish water requires care and a thorough understanding of the hazards involved and the grave consequences of mismanagement.

A large body of useful knowledge and knowhow has accumulated over the past five decades from research and field observations. Despite its general availability, the information is not being extensively used, because it is scattered through the scientific and technological literature. Although some excellent reviews have been published in recent years, there has not been a publication which condensed the information in a comprehensive and readily accessible form.

The annotated bibliography prepared by I. C. Gupta and K. N. Pahwa partially fulfills this need. It contains a short and concise description of 884 scientific papers, reports and books from 56 countries covering the various aspects of saline water irrigation. There is an especially large number of Indian publications which are probably not familiar to people outside of India. The bibliography is arranged in alphabetical order according to the first author's name. It contains a good subject index as well as indexes of authors, source and country of origin.

The authors made a commendable effort. Nevertheless, some important publications escaped their attention. I found that some publications of an author were included while his other equally important works were omitted. It was not apparent whether the authors exercised a policy of selection or that some reports were unintentionally overlooked. Thus, any one who wishes to know all that was published in the field of irrigation and salinity will be disappointed. A more complete, but not annotated bibliography on the plant aspect may be found in the publication of the US Department of Agriculture, SEA Agric. Reviews and Manuals ARM-W-6/Oct 1978 entitled "Plant Response to Salinity: An Indexed Bibliography."

The annotated bibliography is a very useful and timely publication. It will surely save many people a lot of time and some, I am sure, will discover to their delight, as I did, valuable information that had hitherto escaped their attention.

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