Contents

Part I  Theoretical Approach to Comparative Agriculture

1  Comparative Agriculture, Object and Issues ............................ 3
   1.1  Agricultural Development: Object of Comparative Agriculture ... 3
   1.2  Issues Concerning Comparative Agriculture ........................ 6

2  The Origins of Comparative Agriculture and René Dumont’s Legacy ............................................................... 9
   2.1  Origins of Comparative Agriculture ..................................... 9
   2.2  Comparing in Order to Improve ......................................... 10
   2.3  Decisive Renewal for Agronomy and Agricultural Economics .... 12
   2.4  Returning to the Field as an Antidote Against Theorising Drifts ............................................................... 14

3  “Agrarian System”, Integrating Concept of Comparative Agriculture .................................................................. 19
   3.1  Origin and Development of the Agrarian System Concept ...... 19
         Agrarian Structures or Agrarian Systems? The French Geographers’ Input ..................................................... 19
         The “Agrarian System” of French Agricultural Economists ...... 22
   3.2  Scales and Boundaries ...................................................... 28
         From Agricultural District to Country, What Scale Should Be Privileged? .......................................................... 28
         Spatial Bursting, Temporal Telescoping ............................. 31
         The Agrarian System Goes Beyond and Encompasses the Sphere of Primary Production ......................... 35
   3.3  Production System, Cropping System and Livestock Farming System ...................................................... 38
         The Concept of Production System ..................................... 38
         Technical Choices Embedded in Social Relations .................. 40
Production System Versus Activity System: A Badly Formulated Question ................................................. 43
The Cropping System and Livestock System Concepts .......... 45
3.4 Combination of Scales of Observation, Analysis and Comprehension .................................................. 47
3.5 Between Life Sciences and Social Sciences, a Delicate Positioning of the “Agrarian System” ......................... 49

4 Diachronic Approach to Agrarian Systems ......................... 53
4.1 What is an “Agricultural Revolution”? .............................. 54
The Concept of “Agricultural Revolution” ......................... 54
The Four European Agricultural Revolutions ....................... 55
Agricultural Revolutions in Sub-Saharan Africa ................... 56
Green Revolutions .................................................... 61
Every Agricultural Disruption Is Not Automatically an “Agricultural Revolution” ........................................ 62

4.2 Agricultural Crisis, Agrarian System Crisis ...................... 63
Crisis Reflected in the Irreversible Degradation of the Environment .......................................................... 63
Endogenous Crises ................................................... 64
External Crises ..................................................... 64
Political Crises? ...................................................... 65
Many-Sided Crises? .................................................. 66

4.3 Comparative Agriculture, Agricultural “Crises” and “Revolutions” .................................................... 67
4.4 Understanding Change in the Long Term to Better Identify the Process to Be Promoted ............................ 68

5 Comparing Productive Processes ........................................... 71
5.1 Differences in Productivity on a Worldwide Scale and Consequences on Development ................................. 71
5.2 Which Forms of Agriculture Should Be Promoted? .............. 74

Part II Methods and Expertise of Comparative Agriculture

6 Micro-Regional Approach to Agrarian Issues ......................... 89
6.1 Agricultural District: Privileged Object of Analysis in Terms of Agrarian System ........................................ 89
6.2 Reading the Landscape ............................................... 90

7 Terrain and Surveys ........................................................ 93
7.1 Conducting Surveys Oneself and Gathering Qualitative as well as Rigorously Quantified Data .............................. 93
7.2 Knowledge from the Top and Knowledge from the Bottom: Breaking Implicit Hierarchies .......................... 95
7.3 Tools, Machines and Skills: Agricultural Technology and Innovation Problematics ..................................... 97
8 Making History in Comparative Agriculture ........................................... 101
  8.1 A Problem of Sources .............................................................. 101
  8.2 Historical Surveys in Comparative Agriculture .......................... 103

9 How to Build Farm Typologies? ...................................................... 109
  9.1 Brief Survey of Typological Methods ....................................... 109
  9.2 Prior Identification of Production Systems ............................... 110
  9.3 Taking into Account the Conditions of Access to Land and Resources .......................................................... 112
  9.4 Explaining Diversity ............................................................... 113

10 Economy of Agricultural Production Process .............................. 115
  10.1 Linking Economic Approach and Technical Processes ............ 115
  10.2 Economy of Agricultural Production Applied
      at the Production System Level ............................................. 116
      Value Added and Productivity ............................................. 116
      Distribution of VA and Farm Income .................................. 120
      Compared Economic Results: The Ukrainian Example .......... 123
  10.3 The Farmer as Homo-Oeconomicus ...................................... 126
      Homo-Oeconomicus ......................................................... 126
      Cultural Factor and Tradition .......................................... 128

11 Comparative Agriculture and Evaluation .................................... 131
  11.1 Systemic Impact Assessment ................................................. 132
  11.2 Economic Assessment of Development Projects,
      from the General Interest Point of View ............................. 134

Conclusion ..................................................................................... 141

References ..................................................................................... 145
Comparative Agriculture
Cochet, H.
2015, XI, 154 p. 10 illus., 9 illus. in color., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-94-017-9827-3