

Diskrepanz zwischen den pluralistischen Identitäten in der indischen Gesellschaft und dem klassischen Prinzip, nach dem ein kulturell gesehen homogenes Milieu für freie Institutionen unabdingbar ist. In diesem Kontext wird das Konzept Nationalismus in Verbindung mit Identität(en) ausführlich ausgearbeitet.

Dieses Thema wird im 3. Kapitel „Indian democracy: liberalism in its reinvented form“ und im 4. Kapitel „Parliamentary federalism: redefining the Westminster model“ fortgesetzt. Die letzten drei Kapitel 5. „The chaotic 1960s: decade of experiments and turmoil“, 6. „The Left Front and the 2006 assembly elections in West Bengal: Marxism reinvented“ und 7. „Coalition politics in India: cultural synergy or political expediency?“ befassen sich mit Veränderungen in der indischen Politik seit den 1960er Jahren. Die abschließenden zwei Kapitel stellen Resultate eigener Forschungsprojekte des Autors dar. Ein wichtiges Thema ist die enge Verbindung zwischen einigen politischen Parteien und traditionellen sozialen Strukturen.

Hilfreich ist der sorgfältig zusammengestellte Apparat im Anhang, der u.a. „Annotated bibliography“ enthält.

Das Buch stellt die Ergebnisse einer fundierten Studie gesellschaftlicher, rechtlicher und ideologischer Prozesse in Indien während 60 Jahren Unabhängigkeit dar. Zugleich ist dieses in einem eingängigen Stil geschriebene Buch für alle geeignet, die sich für politische Geschichte des größten Landes Südasiens interessieren, und eine empfehlenswerte Lektüre für Studierenden der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften sowie der Rechtswissenschaft.

Tatiana Oranskaia

Mira Fels: Making sense of corruption in India. An investigation into the logic of bribery

Interethnische Beziehungen und Kulturwandel. Ethnologische Beiträge zu soziokultureller Dynamik, Band 64. Münster: Lit Verlag, 2008, XI, 141 S., EUR 19,90

It is amazing how social phenomena, like corruption and bribes, seem to fascinate observers more abroad than at home. A major reason must be, if we follow the annual rankings of Transparency International, that a lack of transparency is so much more pronounced in India than in any “developed” world region. Other reasons would be, that the alien observer not only moves into different territory geographically, but also economically and socially: Besides some petty corruption a young researcher might not have been exposed to the more serious forms of bribing, as those are been taken care of by his elders. But one keeps hearing the most unbelievable tales in any country involving actors belonging to the world of private business as well as government. The reviewer was reminded of this when attending a seminar where a German entrepreneur jokingly remarked after having been lectured on doing business in India that he thought the speaker was talking about his (German) hometown.

The book under review is the outcome of a MA thesis in anthropology and is based on a number of micro studies of the author and others. She attempts to “make sense of corruption in order to arrive at an understanding of the phenomenon”. To do so, she looks at corruption “as experienced in India”, specifically at the “most relevant players”, i.e. “marginalised citizens, bureaucrats and politicians”. (p. 2). As a result of her review of literature, she complains the “normative, etc approach to the subject which was hardly ever questioned” (*ibid.*). But the present campaigns against corruption are less the outcome of morality but of efficiency: Giving a bribe may speed up proceedings and could be considered improving efficiency,

but it will raise expectations of more bribes. In order to make these happen hurdles are raised wherever possible. As the economic and social costs of such behaviour have to be borne by third parties (like the taxpayer and the general public) bribe giver and bribe taker work in collusion, a system that in India is referred to as "hand in glove" (a term not used in the book).

The case studies described in detail and quoted extensively are mainly taken from the field of development projects. A number of encouraging examples of people's resistance are given at the end of the book. Although claiming to take an "emic perspective from an ethnographic point of view" (p. 2), the author uses other researchers' participatory observations. Her contribution is collecting the material and interpreting it. This, in any case, is well done. There must be, however, more material available, for example in the form of unpublished theses and dissertations produced in institutions of higher learning inside and outside India. Academic research is complemented by investigative journalism in Indian newspapers (not only in English) and the proceedings of court cases. The author describes the fight for the right for information in Rajasthan and elsewhere. The Right to Information Act of 2005 obviously was passed too late to find mentioning in the book. But as she writes, it is less the lack of laws than of implementing them what impedes governance so much in India. An overambitious "soft" state, discretionary powers on all levels, and a lack of transparency and accountability make corruption so easy. The recent spread of electronic media and communication (less referred to in the book) greatly helps self-organization and action. She cites the example of a short-lived attempt of a bureaucrat to eliminate corruption by making all deals public. This has become so much easier with internet and mobile phones.

In her introduction the author describes why she is not going to define what corruption is, although she cites a number of common

perceptions. Throughout her book she gives examples and why and how corruption makes sense. It would have been interesting to know, what kind of (trans)actions would be considered by the various actors/victims as corrupt (or the equivalent in the local language) and if, when and under what conditions it would be considered to be morally and/or socially acceptable. Would the attempt of a politician to benefit his clientele at the expense of others ("pork" in American usage) be considered as immoral and/or unacceptable? If bribing is part of an exchange of favours would mutual help be considered as unethical?

In some instances more information might have been useful for readers less familiar with India: The author explains the recruiting system of the elite Indian Administrative Service (IAS) but much less of the other services; the merits and demerits of the intricate system of reserved seats and quotas for scheduled castes and tribes and for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and their repercussions on governance are not easily understood without more elaboration. As for the introductory chapters: There is a vast body of literature on corruption in general and in India in particular, and on India's economy, society and environmental problems, to prove how careful one has to be in generalizing.

Altogether this well written, interesting and enlightening study is at its best when dealing with the various case studies. Making it available in India and having Indians study corruption in the country, where the book has been published, could become a welcome starting point for a stimulating and mutually benefiting "cross-cultural" discussion.

Wolfgang-Peter Zingel

Rasheed Kidwai: Sonia - a biography

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