

who not only know their subject very well, but who also have the ability to present their field in a manner that does not intimidate the less well versed, but nevertheless interested, reader.

Coming to a general and final appraisal it can be said that this handbook indeed fulfills the expectations raised in the foreword. There is one major obstacle, however, preventing this meritorious new publication from being accessible to every serious student of Islam whose native language is German, and that is the comparatively high price (DM 138.-). One can only hope that the publishers soon agree to issue a paperback edition.

Hans-Jürgen Koch

JAKOB RÖSEL: Die Hinduismusthese Max Webers. Folgen eines kolonialen Indienbildes in einem religions-soziologischen Gedankengang. (Materialien zu Entwicklung und Politik, Vol.22). München, Köln, London: Weltforum Verlag, 1982. IV, 102 pages. DM 29.80

The author's most surprising thesis is the assertion that there was no caste-system in India in the strict sense of the word before British domination. According to Rösel European bureaucrats and scholars - among the latter Max Weber - accepted the religious *sāstras* (textbooks) of the brahmins uncritically as depicting the reality of Hindu society. But neither were European scholars so ivory-towered as to accept the absolute supremacy of the brahmins, claimed by brahmin scholars, as a historical fact nor can it be overlooked that the strictly hierarchical organization of the caste-system was no product of British rule. The structural basis of Hindu society is caste, and Sanskritization (i.e. a far-reaching cultural penetration of society by Hindu customs and laws) cannot be understood without reference to the structural framework in which it occurs. Generally speaking, the castes at the top of the hierarchy are more Sanskritized than castes at the lower and middle end of the scale, and this has been responsible for the Sanskritization of the lower castes as well as the tribals. The lower castes always seem to have tried to take over the customs and way of life of the higher castes. On the other hand Rösel's great work "Der Palast des Herrn der Welt" (München and London 1980) shows that a cult such as that of the wooden god Jagannātha of Puri (originally a tribal deity in *Orisā*) became increasingly transformed by brahmins who attempted to play the main role in the ritual. In his analytical study ("Der Holzgott und die Brahmanen", Wiesbaden 1984) of the *Puruṣottama-Māhātmya*, a kind of pilgrim's guide, Ulrich Schneider investigates the different strata of this text and comes to the conclusion that some centuries ago the tribes of *Orisā* supported the kings of that region and therefore were able to establish a cult free from caste-

spirit and the manifold restrictions of Hindu society, a cult which has since been re-brahmanized by this strong social group of priests (striking proof is the fact that the tribal outcastes are not allowed to go into the great temple of Puri).

Besides many other controversial issues between Weber, Rösel and the views of other scholars it should be noted that Rösel asserts the opposite of Weber's postulate, viz., that independent capitalism (in the modern sense) existed in principle in pre-colonial India. To support this Rösel refers to the 300 year-old Asian trade, the role of "Indian money-changers" and "of textile and agricultural capitalists" (p.81), but he has completely overlooked the fact that modern capitalism cannot emerge without the vigorous industrialization of a country. But the British colonialists implanted only enclave industries on Indian soil, and the Indians before the colonial period were not able to industrialize their country. The reasons for the absence of industrialization are indeed manifold, but it seems not to be wrong to describe them as an embarrassment in traditions which are characteristic of most of the non-European countries with the exception of Japan. To answer the question whether independent capitalism could have developed in India, further investigations are indispensable.

Besides all traditional obstacles to industrialization it should not be forgotten that the structure of the Indian subcontinent was largely that of an agricultural society, not a great commercial power.

Another flaw of this book is the author's tendency to lay stress on contradictions in terms like a mathematician (for instance, karman doctrine versus ancestry cult), thereby ignoring the fact that in a field like religion the greatest contradictions can exist side by side.

Klaus Rauwolf

EVA und RUDOLF RICHTER: *Selbsthilfe als Entwicklungsprinzip am Beispiel Sri Lankas*. (Sozialwissenschaftliche Schriften, Heft 9). Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1984. 83 pages. DM 48.-

This little brochure on "Self-help as a Principle of Development: The Case of Sri Lanka" is indeed a stimulus to reflect upon the idiosyncracies of the book-market. The (Austrian) authors collected their material during an obviously short visit to the island in 1977 (as students I suppose, since they were subsidized by an Institute from Vienna University), they wrote a preface in 1980 and the book itself was finally brought out in summer 1984. But it is not only the time-lag between "field-work" and publication of "data" that renders the study more or less useless; the information itself is utterly superficial even when judged by the standards of knowledge available in 1977. The authors had