

JAKOB RÖSEL, *Der Bürgerkrieg auf Sri Lanka. Der Tamilenkonflikt: Aufstieg und Niedergang eines singhalesischen Staates*. (Gesellschaft und Bildung, 13). Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1997. 445 pages, DM 49,50. ISBN 3-7890-4611-6

This study of the Singhalese-Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka is the third monograph by Jakob Rösel on politics and society in South India and Sri Lanka. For several years he worked on Singhalese and Tamil nationalism, the emergence of political movements in the Madras Presidency of Southern India and Ceylon and the transition from colonialism to nationhood. All three books published in 1996 and 1997 stem from his habilitation thesis in political science and must be regarded as one corpus. Two books on nationalism - both reviewed in this issue - cover the period preceding the focus of the volume under review: The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka from 1977 to 1996 and the terror of the Singhalese JVP (Janata Vimukti Peramua - People's Liberation Front) from 1987 to 1990.

Chapter one (pp. 25-53) introduces the historical development of ethnic opposition, chapter two (pp. 55-94) deals with the emergence of a Singhalese state (1948-1970) and chapter three (pp. 95-154) with the final establishment of this state (1970-1983). In the light of the contemporary conflict, the introduction of language laws, school reforms and changes in the administrative system appear as successive and almost logical steps towards a Singhalese dominated state. A major irrigation project is meant to restore ancient Singhalese wet agriculture, Singhalese settlers are sent to the Tamil dominated east coast, and, finally, symbols of Singhalese culture stand for the integrity of the nation. The inter-ethnic climate turned more harsh in public and in parliament, while in the northern peninsula, Jaffna, Tamil youth formed the first separatist movements in the 1970s. Open conflicts escalated in the late 70s and culminated in the anti-Tamil riots in July 1983, which are described and analysed in chapter four (pp. 155-178).

The following three chapters (pp. 179-376) deal with the period 1983-1996. The major tendencies were a polarisation of ethnic relationships and a radicalisation on both sides. When Indian troops, the 'Indian Peace Keeping Force', were stationed in the Tamil north of Sri Lanka in 1987, a second major battlefield emerged among the Singhalese in the south. The JVP, which launched an attack against the government as early as 1968, terrorised the state and the government reacted with its own form of terrorism. This period, characterised by a loss of law and order, Rösel describes as the 'decline of a Singhalese state', as indicated in the subtitle of his book. After the Indian troops left the Island and the new government came to power in 1994, there were fresh hopes. But these hopes were soon destroyed and the cycle of violence continued.

Besides this major theme the book offers a short introduction (pp. 13-24 and a concluding chapter (pp. 377-406), both embedding the Sri Lanka case into a broader framework. At the same time, we learn more about the author's approach. Rösel identifies the nation state, the process of democratisation and modernisation as cornerstones of ethnic violence, all factors present everywhere in most young nations. The development of an uncontrolled and self-propelling process of ethnic violence, however, does not necessarily emerge from such constellations. Therefore, he concludes, the salient aspects are constitutions, development programs and power

structures, which contain or foster ethnic violence (p. 24). In his view politicians are more active than re-active, party politics are more a subject than an object, and the institutional and constitutional aspect of society is more a force than a result of history. Rösel's analysis clearly moves politics into the centre of society, which - from a different point of view - lacks a focal point.

This is a massive book, full of information, and it covers events until 1996, just one year before the year of publication. The author guides his readers through a jungle of events and masters the difficult task of telling the tragic story of ethnic violence in Sri Lanka in an appropriate form. His language is close to the subject and carries the voice of the observer at the same time. Occasionally he cites long quotations from witnesses or earlier analysis. Rösel characterises each phase of recent history and all chapters are structured into several units, each carrying an informative title. Each period stands for one trend that he identifies and characterises. Although the reviewer shares most of the author's opinions, occasionally a different emphasis is conceivable. I shall give one example: Many observers spoke of a turning point - which Rösel mentions only *en passant* (p. 363) - when Tamil separatists resumed violence in April 1995 after the newly elected government under Chandrika Kumaratunge announced a ceasefire in 1994.

To sum up, this book is a brilliant analysis of a major ongoing conflict. It offers a well grounded historical framework for party politics, public elections, constitutional changes and the development of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. As Rösel's strength is clarity in his analysis and in the arrangement of his arguments, his work can be used as a reference book as well.

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TILMAN FRASCH, *Pagan - Stadt und Staat*. (Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung, 172). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996. XIV, 370 pages, 6 maps, DM 122,-. ISBN 3-515-06870-8

The thesis reviewed here deals in six chapters with the little explored history of the medieval Pyu town of Pagan, the capital of the first Burmese empire (1044-1287). In the 36 page introduction Fresch describes at length the sources esp. the (sand)stone inscriptions, gives examples of the difficulties they present and shows his care in dealing with them (p. 12), which required an inductive procedure rather than theoretical concepts (p. 35).

Frasch repeatedly argues the readings and translations even of authorities like Charles Duroiselle, Gordon Luce and ÜPe Maung Tin (p. 8), 16f., 25, 84 et passim). Thus, the diffamation of the Ari monks, who, according to late chronicles, had violated the third and fifth monastic rules (against sexual activity resp. the use of intoxicating drinks), seems to be due to a misinterpretation of the sources (p. 288). Yet Fresch not only evaluates the work of his predecessors, he also takes an interest in their lives, which many readers will appreciate, because it is sometimes difficult to obtain information on these as in the case of Duroiselle.