

Stephanie Zingel-Avé Lallemand, Wolfgang-Peter Zingel (eds.), *Neuere deutsche Beiträge zu Geschichte und Kultur Pakistans / Contemporary German Contributions to the History and Culture of Pakistan*. (Schriftenreihe des Deutsch-Pakistanischen Forums 10). Bonn: Deutsch-Pakistanisches Forum e.V., 1993. XIV + 252 pp., 7 folded leaves with notes. (Available from: Deutsch-Pakistanisches Forum e.V., Postfach 120 401, 53046 Bonn, Germany)

The German-Pakistan Forum tries to propagate knowledge of Pakistan particularly by publishing its "yellow series" containing primarily information on bibliography and research projects or documentary materials. The present volume unites eight contributions on folk literature (Annemarie Schimmel), German linguistic research particularly in the north of Pakistan (Georg Buddruss), Pakistani-German collaboration in investigating the Nanga Parbat area (Karl Jettmar), folk literature (Klaus Sagaster) and music from Baltistan (Renate Söhnen), cultural geography of Hunza (Hermann Kreutzmann), Islamic shrines in Islamabad (Doris Buddenberg) and, finally, on ethnic relations of Panjabis, Pashtuns and Afghan refugees (Bernt Glatzer and Ursel Sieber). All contributions are published simultaneously in English and German. Biographical data of the authors and editors and a list of the volumes already published in this useful series conclude this volume, which provides the specialist as well as the general reader with rich, and up-to-date information.

*Oskar von Hinüber*

JITKA KOTALOVÁ, *Belonging to Others. Cultural Construction of Womanhood among Muslims in a Village in Bangladesh*. (Uppsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology 19). Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1993. XII, 252 pp., ISBN 91-554-3105-4

Originally prepared as a doctoral dissertation, the book under review is, as the author herself writes (p.16), a study of social organisation, "focusing on the symbolic construction of womanhood in a Muslim peasant community in Bangladesh". It is also a study of metaphors, of concepts of self and person, of transformations of the female body throughout the life-cycle. The book is divided into six parts: Encompassment of the Fieldworker; Dominant Structure and Categories; Agnation and Affinity; Production and Reproduction of Hierarchy; Reproduction of Patriline and Hierarchy in Marriage; and Production and Reproduction of Womanhood in Marriages. Each

of these parts is further subdivided into two or more chapters. The general structure of the book attempts to give the reader an idea of the "onion"-like, "encompassing" structures of the society studied, and in this the author is entirely successful. Different ways and levels of "belonging" are described and discussed in the framework of the official construction of gender. These are then compared with women's own cognition of this framework and the strategies used by them to manipulate it. Parallel to this theme of encompassment run two other themes: that of women's perception of various aspects of their social world - be these agnatic relationships or food; and that of the learning of culture, the handling of otherness and the role of metaphors in these processes.

In an interesting application of reflexivity, the author metaphorically links two crucial events: The arrival of the (female) anthropologist in the community of Gameranga (where she was to do fieldwork) and the coming of the bride to her conjugal home. In both cases the shy and hesitant newcomers have to learn the local rules and subject themselves to the dominance of existing structures; in both cases, the author discovers that once mastered, these rules are not as rigid and inflexible as they seemed to be at first. In both cases the women have a dual sense of "fragmented belonging" and it is through their respective journeys back and forth that they gradually change from outsiders to insiders and ultimately come into their own.

*Belonging to Others* is a sensitively written ethnography remarkably rich in detail - though at times perhaps somewhat repetitive and not always easy to read. It provides useful insights into how compliance and dissent function in South Asian societies and beyond this, at a more theoretical level, how people use cultural stereotypes, how they cope with dominant cultural codes. The veiling and silencing of women, for example, is rightly, I believe, construed as resulting not only in restricting them, but also as being used by them to create distance and aloofness. Surprisingly, the author does not pursue these issues further, to at least touch upon the questions of the construction of cultural consensus or even subalternism.

The last few years have seen growing anthropological interest in Bangladesh, and especially in the women of this region. *Belonging to Others* must be judged against the background of this growing body of literature. Unfortunately, Kotalová tends to situate Gameranga in rather a political, demographic, economic, historical, ecological and geographic vacuum. It is a pity that social organization is not considered here as encompassing property relations or the division of labour, nor reproduction and marriage related to gender preference or infant mortality. The force of dominant imagery and the counter-force of silent resistance would have emerged more clearly against the backdrop of information on power relations as a whole. Village society also comes across as a rather implausibly homogeneous unit

- the only dividing line being gender. Differences of age, of class and status - even of temperament - are simply ignored in the all-encompassing structure of gender difference. A less traditionally feminist approach and a more individualized one towards women whose individuality is so suppressed in official discourse would certainly have made *Gameranga* more palpable, and *Belonging to Others* analytically more valuable. As it stands, however, the strength of the book lies in the mass of detailed ethnographic material it provides. It is a valuable contribution to studies of both South Asia and gender relations, independent in spirit and intention, and a must for anyone interested in Bangladesh and Bengali women in particular.

Aparna Rao

DAVID BROWN, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*. (Politics in Asia Series). London/New York: Routledge, 1994. XXI, 354 pp., £ 45.00. ISBN 0-415-04993-8

In many countries of the world, ethnicity and ethnic tensions, to varying degrees, constitute an important feature. Numerous explanations thereof have seen the light of day. But it would be dangerous to treat ethnicity and all its implications everywhere alike. On the contrary, one should be aware that the nature as well as impact of ethnicity - and more especially ethnic politics - vary from country to country.

This is precisely what David Brown seeks to show, and he offers explanations which, according to him, lie in the different character of the states. To explore the relationship between ethnicity and the state in Southeast Asia, the author, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore, presents different models: the ethnocratic state model for Burma, the corporatist model for Singapore, the neo-patrimonial for Indonesia, the internal colonial model for Thailand, and the class perspective on the ethnic politics of Malaysia.

In each of these multiethnic societies, ethnicity certainly plays an important role. Although they all experience ethnic tensions and conflicts - in varying forms and degree - all these countries, except Burma, are nonetheless distinguished by a relative political stability.

Brown rightly emphasizes, however, as a premise for his study, that these countries are not to be treated alike, that they do not have a common distinctive character and - most important - that each is different with respect to the causes and character of its ethnic politics. He therefore wishes to show that it is precisely the differences between state structures, capaci-