

- 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.

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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-

ties and strategies of each country which produce differences in ethnic politics - and not "their unique histories" or "the variations in their cultural pluralism". The state - this is his overarching argument - has a decisive impact on ethnicity in each of the selected countries and therefore also on ethnic tensions, without, however, determining or totally controlling ethnicity, which has a dynamic of its own.

To depict the nature of ethnicity he opts for an unusual, alternative approach which "explains both the situational malleability of ethnicity and also its resilience" (p. 5). Brown sees ethnicity as neither purely primordial nor as purely situational, though he does not deny the useful contribution of these two approaches toward understanding the nature of ethnicity and its role in politics.

He explains that ethnicity functions as a form of ideological consciousness defined as a psychological and political ideology and that it constitutes a powerful kinship myth which proves a response to emotional needs for identity, security and authority and which "individuals employ to resolve the insecurities arising from the power structure within which they are located" (p.1). As it is the power structure of the state which generates this pattern of insecurities, "the character of state constitutes the dominant influence upon the character of ethnic politics" (p. 258).

The power of this kinship myth is explained by Brown in psychoanalytical terms. Individual needs can thus be harnessed for political purposes by means of ethnic ideologies.

One example of an ethnic ideology is the "Malay/Bumiputra-Muslim dominance", which mainly exploits the resurgence of Islam. In Malaysia, class has played an important role since the colonial period and class interests were always expressed through ethnic forms. What is important to note now is that the class character shifted from representing an "alliance of bourgeois class fractions" towards acting more as the instrument of a new dominant Malay "bureaucratic capitalistic class", which emerged after the riots of 1969.

This "Malay state bureaucratic capitalistic class", which then became the dominant force in the bourgeois power bloc, tries to camouflage the income disparities among the Malays - generated by the massive affirmative action program, the "New Economic Policy" - and to maintain its rule by presenting this ideology as a "Malay unifying myth" and a "state ideology".

Brown shows further that it is not only this "dominant class" which uses an ethnic ideology to pursue its aims but different Malay class fractions who employ Islam as an "ideological weapon" for contradictory intentions: The Malay petite-bourgeoisie "employs Islam as a tool to facilitate their own upward mobility into the dominant class"; and the poor Malay peas-

antry uses Islam against the dominating class. The politics of ethnicity in Malaysia is therefore complex and articulated as "the ethno-class consciousness of racially clustered class fractions, and also as the ethnic ideologies of the dominant class, which seeks to unify the class-divided Malays by asserting and institutionalizing Malay-Chinese rivalry" (p. 257).

That the state and its activities somehow play a role, indeed a major one, in influencing ethnicity is not a new finding. But what is original about Brown's study is that he has explored the relationship between ethnicity and the state in Southeast Asia systematically. Furthermore, he explains the nature of ethnicity and ethnic attachment in a most provocative and complex manner: "(...) it is not the cultural attributes themselves which define and generate the ethnic attachment, but rather the variable patterns of status, power and economic insecurities in the social environment. Ethnic consciousness is indeed 'irrational' in the sense that it is a response to emotional needs for identity, security and authority. But it fulfils these needs in part by providing an ideological myth of continuity and permanence which facilitates the adaption of individuals to changing situations of insecurity. If the contemporary state intervenes in society sufficiently to influence the cultural attributes, political options, and security threats with which members of the multicultural societies are faced, then it becomes clear that the form, political manifestations and political consequences are not fixed, but depend to a significant extent upon the variations in the character of the state." (p. 265)

Brown thus shows that it is not the multiethnic character of each of the selected Southeast Asian societies *per se* that crucially influences ethnic politics and ethnic tensions, but above all the character of the state. This is certainly true not only for Southeast Asia but also for countries in other regions of the world. As Brown puts it, "the characterizations of ethnicity and the state which are explored here might, with equal validity, be employed as the starting point for examining ethnic politics elsewhere" (p. xxi).

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JÜRGEN RÜLAND (ed.) *The Dynamics of Metropolitan Management in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1996. 220 pp., \$ 25.00 (pb.), ISBN 981-3055-28-6; \$ 39.90 (hb.), ISBN 981-3055-29-4

This is a timely book that addresses a pressing topic: The management of Southeast Asia's rapidly growing megacities is a daunting task. The eco-