

asserts that economic progress would not have been possible without Chinese and Indian immigrants, but also that Malay history should not be negated nor over-emphasized. Recent political tensions and events have, indeed, shown that other forces are at work, cutting across ethnic boundaries or creating new ones beyond the previous ethnic Malay/Chinese/Indian pattern.

In all, this book is a valuable addition to the literature on ethnicity in Asia.

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ROSS MALICK, *Development, Ethnicity and Human Rights in South Asia*. London: Sage Publications, 1998. 378 pages, £ 35.00. ISBN 0-7619-9227-8

For the last twenty years or so Western industrial nations have made the principle of "good governance" a precondition for "development aid" to Third World countries. Central to the doctrine of good governance are the issues of poverty reduction, addressing the problem of ethnic conflict and social exclusion, and the protection of human rights. Ross Mallick, partly drawing on his own experience as a development consultant as well as on government statistics and academic research findings, puts these issues at the centre of his analysis.

In the opening chapter on "Culture and Development" Mallick discusses the "eurocentric roots" of the idea of "universal human rights" and its coupling with development, concluding that there is "no necessary correlation between development and human rights" and that "both can be promoted for the benefits they provide in their own terms" (p. 17). He makes it clear that "development" needs to be framed in terms of poverty reduction and that human rights need to be extended to minority groups and the politically disempowered. In the next chapter on "Regional Cooperation" Mallick points out the geopolitical strategic and economic interests of Western states and the attempts by South Asian countries to achieve "relative autonomy from foreign powers" by regional cooperation. In chapter 3 Mallick tackles the issues of rural poverty and of untouchability in India. Here and in other chapters he criticises blindness to "unpleasant controversial realities" (p. 47) on the part of academics, in the West as well as in South Asia, who refrain from necessary criticism of specific policies such as the West Bengal Communists' land reform and redistribution measures. He argues against the view that the Left Front achieved social change and significant benefits for the rural poor – a point that is convincingly made in the comparatively tightly argued chapter on "Decentralization and Rural Development". Here Mallick draws on his own and other widely available data on landownership and land redistribution in West Bengal in comparison to a number of Indian states. Mallick provides evidence for the "communist government's failure to shift political power to the lower classes" and the persistent "dominance of the middle and upper classes" (p. 103). However, not all of Mallick's propositions are coherently and convincingly argued. For example, it is not quite clear how his contention that the failure of the Communists in West Bengal is due to the "constitutional restraints of operating in a democracy" (p. 103) is supposed to be related to his earlier

statement that it was "commonly understood that democracy cannot survive and development cannot be maintained without a coercive state" (p. 8). A similar, at times startling, lack of clarity of argument prevails in the chapter on ethnic minorities and the failure of South Asian nation states to guarantee their political representation. Mallick could also have said more about the conflation of ethnic and religious identity and its bearing on nationalist movements, making use of the wealth of studies now available on ethnicity, nationalism and religious fundamentalism. On the other hand, the exacerbation of ethnic conflict and the support of nationalist government policies by foreign aid programmes (such as the Mahaweli Irrigation Project in Sri Lanka), have already been well documented and no new insights are presented here. Overall, Mallick's analysis does not really break any new ground – neither conceptually nor in terms of the data presented, and some of his conclusions seem vague and naive. For example, it is puzzling that he should lament with regard to Sri Lanka that "political and ethnic issues" have not been taken seriously enough (p. 146) by foreign aid donors, given Mallick's own experience with development management, and his quite accurate observation in the preceding pages that the "ethnic problems were too central not to be known to those with even a superficial knowledge of the country" (p. 130), pointing to a "confluence of interests between the Sri Lankan government and the western aid community" at a time when Sri Lanka was seen as "an ideal candidate for implementing the World Bank's structural adjustment programme" and "when such policies were far from generally accepted in the Third World, and Soviet-supported regimes seemed to be still ascendant" (p. 131).

Chapters 7 and 8 deal with the issues of democracy (or the lack of it), and minority dominance and repression in Pakistan and Bangladesh respectively. The following two chapters are devoted to the under-representation of and discrimination against tribes and untouchables in India. As in the preceding chapters, here, too, widely available data are presented (and at times important details such as dates of different development programme periods are missing, as for example in Tables 9.2 – 9.4). However, on the whole Mallick provides a good range of evidence and a critical, if at times contradictory, analysis of some of the complex issues that have been faced by India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The book constitutes a good introduction for students of the history, culture and politics of South Asia. Mallick poses a number of inconvenient, important questions and exposes the self-interest of "development" planners and international development aid agencies and their collusion with indigenous elite interests. Unfortunately, on the basis of Mallick's account, one may also be tempted to conclude that the "very survival of democracy in South Asia will depend on how the dominant elite groups accommodate the needs and aspirations of the deprived and marginalized groups" – although, from some of the evidence he puts forward, it may well be that democracy also depends on how well the states of South Asia respond to the terms dictated to them by the West (p. 337).