

Nonetheless, the book is particularly worth reading for anyone interested in the *longue durée* history of continental and oceanic Southeast Asia. By re-imagining Southeast Asia as a key node in transcontinental exchanges since the Middle Ages, and before the dawn of the “long 16th century”, the book effectively shows the ways in which complex and historically constructed patterns of interaction and exchange eventually led to the development of a free trade area, where – in addition to commodities – peoples, ideas, religions and crafts could circulate, diffuse and adapt locally. The span between the sixteenth and eighteenth century is presented as a watershed moment, in which Europeans began meddling in these established networks and gradually came to take control of them, disrupting their original “openness” and contributing to their “closing”. In this sense, European imperial projects in Asian waters largely followed the model, identified by James Scott, of technocratic simplification for the sake of legibility and control (James C. Scott: *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 2020).

Marco Zappa

MARTINA CLAUS, *Soziale Protestbewegung gegen das ArcelorMittal Großprojekt im Kontext der Adivasi-Widerstandshistorie in Süd-Jharkhand, Indien* [Social Protest Movement against the ArcelorMittal Megaproject in the Context of Adivasi Resistance History in South Jharkhand, India]. Kassel: University Press, 2021. 388 pages, 24 graphs, €24.00. ISBN 978-3-7376-0949-4¹

The Adivasi, classified as “scheduled tribes” in Annex II to the Indian Constitution, are one of the two major disadvantaged groups in India (the other one being the Dalits, or “scheduled castes”) and are granted positive discrimination. All the tribes have their own history, language and culture, but lack a clearly marked territory. The majority of them live in the hilly, often wooded, areas of central and eastern India, as in Jharkhand, a state carved out of Bihar in 2000. Jharkhand is rich in mineral resources, especially coal, iron ore and manganese, and thus became a site for heavy industry right from the beginning of the 20th century. Jamshed Tata started producing steel there, in Jamshedpur, by 1912. Jawaharlal Nehru, who led India into independence and served as its first prime minister, saw the country’s heavy industry as a precondition for achieving full independence. Major projects were begun with little regard for the traditional rights of the local and tribal population. After independence in 1947, the new government upheld the colonial perception of the state as the

1 The book is available online for open access at <https://doi.org/10.17170/kobra-202104123642>.

ultimate owner of “waste” lands and forests and – although tribal rights have been protected in the region since the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act of 1908 – the tribes still have to fight to ensure that its provisions are enforced.

In 2005 representatives of the Government of Jharkhand and Mittal Steel Company N.V. signed a Memorandum of Understanding in which Mittal proposed “to develop, own and operate in the State of Jharkhand an integrated steel manufacturing operation comprising a steel mill, iron ore mines, a captive power plant, a township and related infrastructure in accordance with all applicable laws” (p. 368). At that time, Lakshmi Nawas Mittal, an Indian entrepreneur residing in the United Kingdom, ruled over the largest steel empire in the world, Mittal Steel N.V., which was registered in the Netherlands. In 2006 he took over the multinational steel manufacturing corporation Arcelor, formed by the merger of Aceralia (Spain), Usinor (France) and Arbed (Luxembourg), and created ArcelorMittal.

The steel plant in Jharkhand was to have a capacity of 12 million tonnes per year. The estimated land requirements included approximately 5,000 hectares of “contiguous land” for the project, an additional 3,000 hectares for the power plant and 2,000 hectares designated for “township, recreational activities, and all related social infrastructure activities”, all to be situated adjacent to the township or the mines and collieries. In total, this amounted to 10,000 hectares or 100 square kilometres. Additionally, water requirements of 10,000 cubic metres per hour were to be met by drawing water “from such rivers or other sources as identified by the DPR [Detailed Project Report]” and “for the first fill of the reservoir of 10 million cubic metres” (p. 369).

This giant project attracted considerable criticism in India and abroad. Interest in Germany arose also because German firms in the 1950s had constructed the Rourkela steel plant in Odisha, not far from the border of present-day Jharkhand. This had quickly become the focal point of German development assistance, and German anthropologists later studied the impacts of such large projects on the tribal population’s culture, socio-economic conditions, livelihoods and natural environment. Their 2007 report was reviewed in this journal,² and some years later Martina Claus and Hans Hartig outlined the dispossession caused by the German-Indian steel plant project in their 2010 book, also reviewed in this journal.³

In her new book, Martina Claus deals with social protest movements against the ArcelorMittal megaproject in the context of the history of Adivasi resistance in South Jharkhand. The work is written in German, but all quotes from interviews are in English. It also contains a copy of the full text of the MoU between the Jharkhand government and Mittal Steel Company N.V. (pp. 367–379).

2 Book Review by Wolfgang-Peter Zingel: Adivasi-Koordination in Deutschland e.V. (ed.), Rourkela und die Folgen. Heidelberg: Draupadi, 2007. *International Quarterly for Asian Studies* 41(1/2), 2010, pp. 128–130.

3 Book Review by Wolfgang-Peter Zingel: Martina Claus / Hans Hartig: Verraten und verkauft in Rourkela. Heidelberg: Draupadi, 2011. *International Quarterly for Asian Studies* 43(3/4), 2012, pp. 386–387.

In the chapter on methodology the author lays out Andreas Witzel's concept of problem-oriented interviews (p. 145). Claus is fully aware of the language "deficit" of researchers with limited command of local languages, but believes that she gained enough experience in previous field studies to gather the essence of the conversations (p. 145). Language obviously presents a major problem in qualitative interviews, where the researcher might have limited, if any, command of the local language and has to rely on an interpreter. The link language used, in this case most probably English or Hindi, might not be the mother tongue of any of the persons involved in the interviews, risking mis- and overinterpretation. Unfortunately, no further information is provided about the languages used in communication with the locals.

In her chapter on the theories of protest and social movements, Claus follows Joachim Raschke and his five functions of social movements – orientation, mobilisation, integration, management and legitimation (pp. 117–118). She argues that, although developed in the West, this concept is also applicable to the movements under study in Jharkhand. As she lays out in the English abstract, for evaluating her material she used the Grounded Theory method:

[...] examined in more detail to establish links to concepts of common social movement theory. [...] the findings will be considered in the context of previous regional protest in South Jharkhand. [...] Finally [...] the importance of learning from practical examples from the "Global South" will be emphasized with the feedback of the results into the local (European) theory of science. The dissertation uses the centuries-long history of resistance to show the specificity of the Adivasi (and Moolvais [established non-tribal settlers]) in the region [...] who to this day continuously stand up for their right to self-determination on the land. (p. 10)

This protest is, as she elucidates, not an ideological one. It reflects the desire of the Adivasi to continue their lives as a community in their traditional environment. This wish has been, and still is, threatened by plans concocted over their heads and without their participation, even without their knowledge, as when they discover surveyors and administrators roaming their lands without any permission or legal rights. In their struggle, which the study describes in detail, the local population has been careful to make sure that their protest is not taken over by extremist groups, as their area lies in the so-called Naxalite Belt of insurgency that extends from the border of Nepal all across the Dekhan into the south.

Special attention is given to the role of women in the resistance movement (pp. 237ff.). Discussing the role of a prominent female leader, Claus emphasises that "the researcher permanently self-reflected and often asked herself whether it was because of her Eurocentric way of thinking that she sensed [...], while talking to male activists, a certain, though tacit and unconscious, distinction of an (especially critical) valuation of the work of female leaders" (p. 238, my translation).

That, in the end, the steel project came to naught is only partially a consequence of the resistance of the Adivasi. The MoU was signed in October 2005 and valid for 24 months with an extension clause. However, already in 2006 the alarm had been raised of the looming financial crisis that became known as the Great Recession of 2008, which began with risky loans to house builders in the United States, with repercussions on the world steel market. This would explain why ArcelorMittal's interest in the project waned, although new plans for Jharkhand and elsewhere in India arose from time to time. In this book, the author focuses on explaining how tribal resistance can bring down Big Projects (*Großprojekte*) that threaten the tribe members' lives and livelihoods. Whether any Development Project Report, as stipulated in the MoU, had been presented, is not discussed. But the voices of the Adivasi emerge clearly, as do the author's concerns about gene manipulation, toxic pesticides and profit-oriented seed companies (p. 115).

A second volume with the transcripts of the interviews unfortunately remains unpublished, for privacy reasons and to protect the informants. It would certainly provide a wealth of information for further research for social scientists and ecologists.

The book documents how local self-organisation and resistance can protect tribal populations from dispossession and eviction, if only – as in the present case – by forcing overzealous politicians and bureaucrats to follow the rules and, thus, gaining time until new developments save them. Such cases are not limited to tribal areas of India, but can be observed around the world. The book, thus, can be recommended for all who are interested in civil rights movements. Since the book is also available free of charge in machine-readable form, those who cannot read German might consider applying advanced machine translation. A complete copy of the book, including colour pictures and graphs, is available for free on the internet. The printed book itself contains only black and white images.

Wolfgang-Peter Zingel