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wing have deliberately set out to create an elaborate, fatuous enchantment of glossy credulity, on which the whole system runs.

This book could be decidedly shorter; it would be better without recommending such inappropriate neologisms as 'appropriationism', without at least three incomprehensible quotations, and without some English infelicities of its own brewing. But it is excellent anthropology; it marries interesting ideas and good stories, skilfully, not too pretentiously, in a serious, unquestioned drive for 'truth'. And we are all (who are the exceptions?) out of our depth on 'rationality'.

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SOUTHON, MICHAEL. *The navel of the prahu: meaning and values in the maritime trading economy of a Butonese village*. xiv, 150 pp., illus., maps, tables, bibliogr. Canberra: Australian National University, 1995

Few ethnographic studies on sailing and inter-island trade in Indonesia are available. Southon's book is therefore a welcome contribution towards a better documentation and understanding of Indonesian maritime cultures. The empirical locus is the village Gerak Makmur on South Buton. The ethnographic focus reveals the complex network of voyaging sustaining the community and how activities such as building boats (*prahu*), formal borrowing of boats, recruitment of crews, departure and homecoming, etc., are elaborated through ritual activities. In the introduction a useful review of relevant literature on the ethnographic area and Indonesian sailing is followed by a historical outline of the Butonese maritime tradition. The two first chapters concentrate on village layout, history and *prahu* economy. The three last chapters examine the ways in which maritime activities are conceived and expressed by Butonese islanders.

Central to the author's analysis of the prominent position of the *prahu* in Buton cosmology is the symbolic relationship between houses and boats also connoting procreation and gender relations. The construction of a *prahu* represents the union of male and female principles. In my view Southon is at his analytical best when he handles symbolic complexity. Most anthropologists agree that symbols are multivocal, but that multivocality is often lost in search of key symbols or 'the most significant' meaning. In Southon's analysis the *prahu* is both female and male at the same time. The boat is a representation of the household unit (of husband and wife, p. 61) and vice versa. What is most important here touches on a major moral principle in the region: the need of harmony. Evil and good forces oppose each other everywhere. If harmony is not achieved within the household or on board a ship, the

result is surely disastrous. Harmony, in these contexts, is accomplished also by stressing the cultural importance placed on gender complementarity. It is consistent with this cultural theme when the formal borrowing of a boat, by a captain from its owner, is compared to the transfer of a daughter in marriage. Reference to both mother and father is another association utilized by the Butonese when they express the nature of the *prahu*. The captain has to be nurturing when fathering his crew. The boat is constantly moving, a male activity, women stay at home. Symbols are of course tied to the experiences of people. It therefore surprises me when the Butonese have not mentioned what other Indonesians (Bonerate and Timpaus) and even Norwegian fishermen express freely: that in times of dangerously rough waves, they long for home (that may be interpreted as the safety of their mothers). In times of danger at sea (another potent symbol of good and evil forces) the boat represents the safest place to be.

Although this reader is generally convinced by Southon's analysis, I did at times wonder if we are not presented with purely ideological statements. I have the impression that more recounting of actual incidents would have modified some statements. We are for instance told that when a crew member dies during a voyage the captain is held responsible, due to lacking *ilmu* (magical knowledge). Further, the captain will not again be able to command a boat before three years have passed. According to my experiences with Bonerate *juragan* (captains), they too would lose in reputation if a crew member died during a voyage, but they would not have to stop sailing unless more accidents occurred.

Such methodological problems do not hamper the overall value of the book. This unpretentious study takes an important step in contributing to the ethnographic record of maritime cultures in Indonesia. The analysis of *prahu* symbolism is refreshing. The book is important, also because we find Butonese sailors all over coastal Indonesia where many have settled far away from their home island, influencing social life in their new communities. This book should be of interest to all who want more information on Buton or maritime cultures in Indonesia.

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VAN DER VEER, PETER (ed.). *Nation and migration: the politics of space in the South Asian diaspora* (S. Asian Seminar Ser.). viii, 256 pp., illus., bibliogr. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1995. £31.50 (cloth), £14.95 (paper)

These nine articles began as talks presented in the Annual South Asia Seminar at the University of Pennsylvania in 1991-92. The editor's introduction weaves them together by emphasizing

the 'diasporic imagination', skilfully delineating themes of nation and migration, nation and religion, politics of and across space, and issues of marginality and centrality. Predictably, some of the contributors relate to these themes better than others.

Verne Dusenbery's opening discussion of changing Punjabi/Sikh identities over time links overseas Sikh political backing for a territorial homeland in India with Sikh efforts to claim places abroad. The argument works best for Sikhs in Canada, but his discussion is comparative, thought-provoking and works well with the themes set out above. John Kelly focuses on the post-1970 Hindu devotional missions to Fiji, the Sai saba and ISKCON (Hare Krishna) movements, and their reception by Indo-Fijians who are not 'comfortably national people' (p. 44). One does not get a sense of the full national context for these movements, since he hardly discusses the presumably more numerous Hindus and Muslims in Fiji who are not followers of them, and while the indigenous Fiji Christians loom ominously in the background, one is not sure to what extent the new Hindu missions are responsible for arousing their antagonism to Indo-Fijians. But Kelly skilfully does what he sets out to do, which is to provide somewhat less than what one wants to know about the Fijian variations on the issues raised by van der Veer. Madhavi Kale's article on indentured labour migration from India to Trinidad and British Guiana from 1836-1885 is clearly a dissertation chapter, focuses on cultural continuities under colonialism, and relates less well to the volume's general issues. Aisha Khan's piece on Muslims in Trinidad follows, and while Khan employs the language of the introduction one misses the specificities, the evidence, to ground the lively quotations and her own rather wordy generalizations. The next piece by Steven Vertovec compares Hindus in Trinidad and Britain and indirectly sheds light on Khan's subjects by supplying a changing socioeconomic profile of the Indians in Trinidad. Vertovec writes clearly and concisely, integrating data and theory to show the contrasting constructions of Hinduism in Trinidad's colonial plural society, with its collectivized, reified set of Hindu symbols, and modern Britain's 'multicultural' society, with its segmented, localized discourses and spaces.

The next two pieces look at South Asians in New York City: Susan Slyomovics analyses the 1990 Muslim World Day Parade and Madhulika Khandelwal lays out changing spatial concentrations of Indian immigrants in Queens from 1965 to 1990. Slyomovics comments on issues of national origin and gender in that particular parade, whetting one's appetite for a more systematic and detailed study of this event over time. Khandelwal highlights Indian cultural and religious activities and ethnic busi-

nesses and calls for situating South Asians in relation to other local racial and ethnic groups.

The final two pieces focus on South Asians in Britain, with both Sallie Westwood and Parminder Bhachu exploring gendered economic, political and social spaces. Westwood traces the evolution of the Red Star African Caribbean and South Asian soccer team into a Black inner city youth project and a force in Leicester urban politics, showing the local and generational basis of shifting South Asian concepts of masculinity. Parminder Bhachu likewise dispels essentialized stereotypes of British Asian youth, discussing British South Asian women from a range of class backgrounds. Working particularly with detailed material on changing dowries and increasing control over dowries by brides among Punjabi Sikh migrants to Britain from East Africa, she establishes the women as powerful actors in locally-based patterns of consumption and cultural innovation.

This stimulating set of writings argues well for diverse, highly contextualized South Asian identities in diaspora.

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VIDAL, DENIS. *Violences et vérités: un royaume du Rajasthan face au pouvoir colonial* (Stud. Hist. social Sci. 62). 289 pp., illus., map, bibliogr. Paris: EHESS, 1995. 200 FF

This ethno-historic study of the impact of colonial 'indirect rule' on local politics in the kingdom of Sirohi (Rajasthan, India) during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, should be a welcome companion and counterpoint to the most influential English language examination of the topic, Nicholas Dirks's *The hollow crown* (1987). Rather than treating local politics, particularly as articulated by the institution of Hindu kingship, within the later colonial Princely State as a misdirected, farcical and, ultimately, inconsequential endgame of a colonial discourse gone mad, this study takes the unusual step of using the Princely State as an important vantage point for examining the emergence and development of particular forms of nationalist discourse. Vidal's study of 'Princely India' thus treads on territory usually reserved for those working on nationalism in 'British India' and forces a re-examination of some of the topical boundaries within South Asian studies by pointing up the value of bringing these two halves of colonial India within a unified analytic framework.

The great strength of the book lies in the author's attention to how different groups in Sirohi appropriated aspects of the new regimes of truth that attended colonial rule for uses that were unforeseen and unintended by the British. Through these Indian appropriations, which in turn triggered unplanned responses