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Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities. By Yen Le Espiritu. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992. 222 pp.

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language(s) of the people one is studying, and Chapter 11 questions how factual the “facts” economists collect are.

Chapters 1 and 2, written by the editors, present an overview of fieldwork from start to finish: from how to finance fieldwork, to relations with bureaucrats, to post-fieldwork obligations and adjustments. The fundamental nature of these topics suggests how basic is much of the subject matter covered by this book. Chapter 3, by Stephen Devereux, considers two of his early fieldwork worries: the pragmatics of learning the local language (he worked among a “polygamous polyglot” [p. 47] population), and how to count households. He found it was often unclear what constituted a household. Chapter 4, by Wendy Olsen, discusses random sampling and the value of using native categories to construct stratified samples. She also considers the advantages and problems of repeated surveys, in her case, monthly household surveys. Chapter 5, by John Hoddinott, addresses problems of doing fieldwork under time constraints. Chapter 6, by Elizabeth Francis, imagines problems arising from how informants perceive fieldworkers and describes how and for what purposes she collected life histories—to reconstruct from personal stories a local history of economic change. Chapter 7, by Lucia da Corta and Davuluri Venkateshwarlu, focuses on methods for gathering data on economic mobility. Chapters 8 and 9, by Garry Christensen and Barbara Harriss, respectively, deal with problems of collecting sensitive material from informants about livestock and informal credit in the first instance, and about trade from traders in the second—good chapters, these. Chapter 10, by Shahrashoub Razavi, is concerned with the advantages and disadvantages of being an Iranian woman doing fieldwork in Iran—lots of advantages. As noted, in Chapter 11, Matthew Lockwood warns against thinking data represent “facts.” Data are the product of the interaction between informants and fieldworker and reflect their interpretations. Chapter 12, by Ken Wilson, focuses on ethical issues of fieldwork, and chapter 13, by Judith Heyer, concludes the book by comparing village-level fieldwork in Kenya and India. Taken together, this well-presented and integrated collection of articles offers the novice fieldworker a rich bagful of experience. That Asia, especially India, is the setting for many of the chapters is an added dimension.

MATTISON MINES

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Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities. By YEN LE
ESPIRITU. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992. 222 pp.

Yen Le Espiritu views panethnicity—shifts in levels of ethnic group identification from smaller and hitherto distinct groups to larger-level affiliations—as an emergent phenomenon among Asian Americans. Likening Asian American panethnic groups to those being forged by Native Americans and Latino Americans, she emphasizes the imposition of ethnicity (or in this case panethnicity) from the outside. She argues, however, that the panethnic concept may have originated in the minds of outsiders but it has now become a resource for insiders. To make her case, she considers the Asian American movement, electoral politics, social service funding, conflicts over census classification, and organizational responses to anti-Asian violence.

The author brings a good deal of personal enthusiasm and idealism to her inquiry, as the dedication and thanks in the preface indicate. A brief survey of the early history of Asians in the United States includes discussions of “disidentification” (the

distancing of one group from another) and of interethnic labor movements based on class rather than ethnic interest groups (here she misses the Filipino-Mexican efforts of the late 1920s and 30s). Then she argues that only in the 1960s with a predominantly American-born Asian population did pan-Asian unity become feasible. This was so because only after World War II did people of Asian background share a common language and a common identity associated with the United States (pp. 25–27). For members of the second and third generations, commonalities were more important than differences based on national origin; also, after World War II, many Asian people moved to the suburbs, segregation among Asians declined, and ethnic enclaves began to accommodate diverse populations. Asian American activists on college campuses in the late 1960s built a student movement, admittedly one that not only reflected disillusionment with the “traditional communities” but claimed solidarity with other Third World minorities (p. 31). She traces the development of Asian American studies on campuses, ethnic/panethnic publications, and the Asian American antiwar, new left, and women’s movements to show the creation of a community by the young activist “cultural entrepreneurs” (p. 52). The following chapters show the institutionalization of a pan-Asian concept by politicians, social service activists, and professionals, and state-funding sources and bureaucratic operations (like the Census). Her final substantive chapter reviews anti-Asian violence and recent Asian American reactions to it.

Yen Le Espiritu’s survey of these topics is competent and often interesting, particularly concerning the pressure on the Census Bureau to count Asian Americans separately. But she does not make a convincing case that panethnicity is a real force among Asian Americans in general. She notes that pan-Asian cooperation is infrequent in the electoral arena and came about in the social service arena because of pressure from government agencies. She suggests that while the counting of Asian Americans separately in the Census might suggest an absence of pan-Asian solidarity, the struggle for separate counts was waged by pan-Asian groups (p. 131). She has some good details on the real or perceived inequities among the various groups and their leaders within the Asian American category, and on the somewhat ambivalent position of Filipino Americans, who could conceivably join the Hispanic panethnic community instead. She also brings out the disruptive impact of the post-1965 influx of new Asian immigrants on Asian American coalitions. Her final chapter asserts the continuing importance of race in American society, gives a balanced overview of cooperation and conflict among Asian Americans, and predicts that panethnicity can be a positive and empowering force on the American scene. The book is a useful and thoughtful contribution to the growing literature on the fluidity and many levels of ethnic identity, and on the continual creation and re-creation of culture.

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How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America. By RICK FIELDS. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1992. xvii, 434 pp. \$20.00.

This remarkable story of the comings and goings of American and Asian Buddhists, back and forth across the Pacific, is told in a lively, engaging manner, in great detail. By focusing on the persons in the drama, what they did and said, this history recounts the notable careers of Col. Henry S. Olcott, Ruth Fuller Sasaki, and Phillip