

BOOK REVIEWS: COMPTES RENDUS

The Hour of the Fox: Tropical Forests, the World Bank, and Indigenous People in Central India

Robert S. Anderson and Walter Huber

Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988. xiii + 158 pp. \$25.00 (cloth)

Reviewer: John H. Bodley

Washington State University

This is an extended case study of a massive development project supported by the World Bank and the Indian government, between 1975 and 1981, in the Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh. The \$7.5 million Bastar Technical Assistance Project was designed to install a forest-industry corporation which would annually convert up to 46 square kilometres of India's largest remaining tropical forest into a plantation of monocrop pines to produce pulp for paper manufacturing. The idea was to make an otherwise "unproductive" forest and an underemployed, impoverished population into an economically profitable asset that would help ease India's foreign debt. This project is especially significant because it illustrates the folly of large-scale technical assistance projects that emphasize technology and economic components while neglecting the needs of the local people who will ultimately be most affected. The Barstar project was terminated primarily because the tribal residents of the forest overwhelmingly rejected it, although many other intractable social and political problems also arose.

Bastar is a forested, predominantly tribal district, with a relatively low population density of only 47 persons per square kilometre, roughly half the average for Madhya Pradesh. Nearly 70 percent of the district's 1.8 million people are Gondi speakers. They are forest-dependent, self-sufficient, shifting cultivators and hunters. For some 400 years the tribal people were loosely incorporated into the regional Hindu kingdom of Bastar, which became a semi-autonomous princely state under the British. The tribal people had maintained control of the forests and enjoyed considerable autonomy, but, since Indian independence, regulation of forest resources has increasingly come under outside control. The externally initiated Bastar forestry project represented an extreme disregard for traditional tribal claims. The local people rejected the project because they recognized that it would ultimately destroy the forest which provided their basic needs, while leaving them impoverished and dependent on the market economy.

This book is a natural history of the project. Both authors are trained anthropologists with extensive experience in India. They write not as participants in the Bastar project, but as careful investigators who collected oral and documentary material from many sources, visited the area, and interviewed those involved at all levels. They present the historic and ethnographic background of Bastar and analyze in detail the differing motivations and perceptions of the various parties involved, including the local tribal residents, state and national forestry-department officials, the technical consultants, and the special forest-development corporation established by the project.

The most striking finding of this study is the planners' arrogant disregard for the social implications of the project. While the feasibility study was expected to

take some two years, barely 1 percent of the budget was allotted for the "tribal component," which was carried out in less than six months. A complete assessment of the relationship between the tribal peoples and the forest could hardly have been obtained in such a short time, but, even so, the tribal report clearly showed the serious negative social impact of the project.

The termination of the Bastar project came at a time when World Bank projects in other parts of the world were coming under increasing attack. For example, by 1980 tribal peoples were forcibly resisting the Bank's hydroelectric projects in the Philippines, and many critics of Bank policy were raising concerns about the environmental and human costs of development in Brazil. These events were at least partly responsible for the background paper by Robert Goodland, *Tribal Peoples and Economic Development*, issued by the World Bank in 1982, which declared that the World Bank would not support projects which tribal peoples rejected.

Hindu Women and the Power of Ideology

Vanaja Dhruvarajan

South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey, 1989. viii + 168 pp. \$39.95 (cloth)

Reviewer: Helen Ralston

Saint Mary's University

This is a fascinating ethnographic study, of the ambivalent status of high- and low-caste Hindu women in a South Indian village, that aims to investigate why Hindu women have such low status as persons, yet such high status as mothers. The explanatory factor is identified as the powerful androcentric Hindu ideology of Pativrata, which rests on patriarchy and which governs all aspects of women's lives within and across caste and class divisions.

Pativrata ideology is based on assumptions about the nature of men and women and their dominant-subordinate interrelationships. Dhruvarajan's study brings out the dualistic conception of woman in Hindu thought. The feminine principle (shakti) is seen as both a creative, benevolent power and a dangerous destructive one. The female principle is complementary to the male principle. When linked with man and controlled by him, woman creates life.

Dhruvarajan's thesis is cogently argued and supported through nine chapters. Chapter 1 presents the village setting — its economic and social structure, caste composition and status relationships. An appendix provides a complementary statistical profile. Chapter 2 describes data collection with a sensitive awareness and an uncommonly frank discussion of the author's relationship to the village and to the interviewees. Chapter 3 clearly explicates the ideology of Pativrata and the book's core argument: again, Pativrata ideology is created, sustained and reproduced by a patriarchal social structure. Women of all castes silently accept their situation and consider it appropriate.

Chapters 4 to 8 set out the structural context of women's lives and their socialization for marriage, arrangement of marriage, married life, old age and widowhood. The rich ethnographic detail of these chapters does not impede the flow of the description and analysis. The background information from 22 selected case his-