

ral poverty. In a third article, Gunter Meyer describes the fate of farmers displaced by the giant Euphrates dam in northeast Syria. He does not himself make a more general critique but the comparison with other similar dam projects around the world could be made by an informed reader.

The other articles vary in length and the extent to which they specifically discuss the actual or potential contributions of anthropologists. The first has a very intriguing point which is not explained in enough detail to be clear. Alice Morton describes the two quite different notions of appropriate research held by an indigenous Moroccan research institute and the USAID Moroccan office. The other two articles on Morocco discuss unintended consequences of agricultural policy in two rural settings, which could have (by implication) been avoided by more appropriate research.

The three articles on Tunisia describe economic change in three regions, covering such issues as water use, differential access to resources among farmers and tourism, without focussing directly on what anthropologists did or could have done to change the research situation. Dawn Chatty describes the gradual integration of the nomadic Harasiis into the modern Omani state. She too describes her research results rather than specifically discussing the role of the anthropologist.

Three articles, one each on Libya, Egypt and Israel, do focus on the contribution of the anthropologist, although all three articles are shorter, providing less detail than most of the others. Charles Swagman and Daniel Varisco provide an interesting contrast in articles about the Yemen Arab Republic. They both discuss the anthropologist's role in rural development policy, but Swagman shows the disadvantages when the anthropologist is expected to be a field officer as well, while Varisco describes the frustrations when the anthropologist is not supposed to implement his/her recommendations.

This is certainly an interesting collection, but if the editors had clearly reiterated and tied together the points made about the role of anthropology in their introduction, it would have been a more generally useful volume.

### **Dependence and Autonomy: Women's Employment and the Family in Calcutta** Hilary Standing

New York: Routledge, 1991. vii + 198 pp. \$16.95 (paper)

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Hilary Standing's study primarily deals with the effects of "women's entry into employment on intra-household relations in an urban Third World context [Calcutta] in which there has been little tradition of female employment but where economic pressures have brought a recent increase in the proportion of women entering or seeking waged work" (p. 1). Of particular concern to her is the impact of women's employment on urban Bengali familial ideologies. Standing also tangentially addresses the larger issue of whether and to what degree involvement in paid labour supplies these women with "the conditions or pre-conditions for their greater emancipation . . ." (p. 1).

Chapter 1 introduces the issues, the methods used and a brief background to women and labour in Calcutta. Data were collected during 12 months in 1981-82, with two

short visits in 1984 and 1985. A mix of survey method and informal interviewing was employed. Bela Bandyopadhyaya and Standing carried out the research "collaboratively" (p. 16). Standing's focal population was composed of women (and some men) in 114 households, most selected from a random sample of 2500 households identified in the 1976 Calcutta Poverty Survey because they contained women working outside the home in non-domestic contexts. It is not clear, but appears that the formal interviews themselves were primarily done by two research assistants. Neighbours and kin were also more informally queried, though, explicitly, individual households rather than localized communities formed the central focus of inquiry.

Chapter 2 provides some socioeconomic background information on these employed women. This chapter demonstrates a marked difference in the style of work-force participation of women from middle-class West Bengali origins (about one quarter of sample households) and those in the 54 households that were refugee in origin, most having previously belonged to the "landowning, professional and urban-middle classes in the then East Bengal [now Bangladesh]" (p. 24). Women in the former instance were employed almost exclusively in teaching and other professional occupations. Deriving from households with less certain income, refugee women however appeared to secure work wherever they could find it, primarily in unorganized factory and tailoring jobs. Standing asserts (p. 24) that the work force participation rate of refugee women is much higher than among other groups, based on the observation that 47 percent of her sample households are refugee in origin, though they comprise but 15 percent of the general Calcutta population. Her small sample size however limits the confidence one can have in this conclusion. The occupations of women from poor proletarian households are not clearly identified until the next chapter. This chapter also includes a brief analysis of household composition and demographics, household and women's incomes and women's motives for entering the labour force.

Chapter 3 examines women's employment options through time, current working conditions and work histories. These are shown to be highly class-specific and unequally remunerative. For instance, poor women typically do home-based piecework or are engaged in "self-employment in sweated conditions," while college-educated, middle-class women are typically found in the public sector.

Chapter 4 follows this with a brief history of urban household organization in Calcutta and an interesting look at the effect of women's employment on the household division of labour and a brief commentary on women's employment and ideologies of domesticity. Reported levels of housework were virtually the same in all classes, and predictably, employment did not necessarily lessen women's household burdens. There was no clear indication that men in any way increased their own household efforts to lighten the workload of women.

Chapter 5 looks at how women's earnings are controlled and dispersed. Chapter 6 considers the ideological implications of paid employment for women, suggesting that the majority of women did not feel that their employment had any effect on how they were treated by other family members or on family status, though a majority felt that their influence in the family had increased as a result. A majority, however, also were dissatisfied with their current employment, often citing low pay and uncertain working conditions. Chapter 7 attempts "to situate the issues in a wider historical context through an examination of the relationship between changes in family form, the construction of female dependency and women's employment in Bengal" (p. 14). This chapter is primarily historical and macrosociological, though it is complemented by a

number of paragraph-long case studies of particular women. A brief summary conclusion, a good bibliography and an effective index end the book.

In an overall sense, *Dependence and Autonomy* makes a significant contribution to the literature on urban South Asian working women, and by extension to the larger discourse on gender, work and household relations. One of its central strengths is that it firmly situates the women under investigation in a historical context of gender, household, family and work in Calcutta. Indeed, the writing strategy of beginning each chapter with an historical and sociological run-up to the survey data is very effective. This strategy helps one get an understanding of how particular historical moments create female dependency differently, and how in the present instance access to paid work does not necessarily produce a single, linearly related effect on the form and degree of women's autonomy. Another strength is Standing's keen appreciation of the multifaceted nature of the issues she is considering and her unwillingness to ram her data into an overly simplistic theoretical mould. This comes through on virtually every page dealing with the contemporary material, where one finds a host of key issues, implications, intervening variables, qualifications and analytical questions interspersed among the empirical findings. Moreover, Standing is to be commended for creating such a complicated and varied set of data, and thereafter not trying to oversimplify it. This approach reinforces the advances that feminists have made in regard to analyzing and deconstructing family and household in South Asia and elsewhere, presenting confirming instances of the benefits of detailed intra-household analysis disaggregated by gender and role.

The main qualifications I have about this book are methodological and stylistic. Having decided to base the study primarily on a formal survey of women in 118 unconnected households scattered throughout Calcutta, Standing places herself on difficult methodological terrain. Such a sample is far too small to say anything certain about Calcutta working women in general (as Standing usually appreciates), yet because it lacks a highly local social or geographical base it is not amenable to the kind of detailed ethnographic investigation that would have allowed Standing to delve deeply into individual women's lives and ways of seeing. Perhaps the foreclosure of the latter option led Standing to employ a writing style that rarely allows her subjects to speak forth from the text. Individual women enter primarily through examples that are a paragraph or less, and even then the author firmly maintains control over the discourse. Even short quotations are rare, and most of the analytical discussion is oriented towards the survey data. This results in Standing painting primarily the broad picture, in which one gets a good sense of the breadth but little of the depth of women's experience, whether as part of the waged or unwaged labour force. I would also have liked to see a few of the central orienting concepts made more problematical, most notably "household" and "autonomy."

Overall, I would recommend this book to a number of audiences. The most central one is that concerned with gender, household and family in South Asia. It also provides important baseline data for those involved in urban development, again most particularly in South Asia.