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TSING, ANNA LOWENHAUPT. *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen: Marginality in an Out-of-the-Way Place*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993. xvi+350 pages. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$49.50/£35.00; ISBN 0-691-03335-8. Paper US\$14.95/£10.95; ISBN 0-691-00051-4.

Writing an ethnography is never an easy matter, since it forces the author to select from the mounds of information collected in the field just those data that will reflect the understandings he or she gained of the people the book discusses. An ethnography, then, is not so much a true picture of the culture of "a people," but rather an approach to such an understanding; it is a construction that as faithfully as possible reflects what the author learned. The effort is further complicated by the foci chosen for special attention and the theoretical orientations brought to bear on the data.

Within these parameters, *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen* is an interesting effort. This volume on the life of the Meratus Dayak of Kalimantan within the context of the larger nation state of Indonesia brings to the fore issues that do not usually become the focus of more traditional ethnographies. Rather than give the reader an abstract, essentialist anthropological picture of a strange culture, Tsing focuses on the Meratus's marginality, both in their relation with the neighboring coastal Banjar and with the policies of the Indonesian government as these are formulated in faraway Jakarta and carried out more or less diligently by its local agents.

Tsing writes that she did not set out to specifically study these things, but became aware of them early in her fieldwork. Her theoretical orientation, however, discussed at length in the first part of the book, made her receptive at least to the possibility of marginality as a research problem. Her theoretical introduction draws upon nearly every postmodernist current flowing through the social sciences and humanities today: "deconstructed" anthropology, feminism, ecology, and the like. This densely written section is definitely not for the tyro, although it does give a good bibliography for those who would like to explore matters further. Among all the various currents present in this complex exposition, however, I did not get a clear feeling of Tsing's own voice. A concise statement of her own position would have been a help.

One thing that is clear is her constructionist position on culture. Although, because of her attention to marginality and the Meratus's interaction with the outside world, Tsing does not always give as sharp a focus as might have been hoped for to the activities of daily life (commonly described in essentialist ethnographies), she

definitely sees these to be the result of individual decisions. *Adat* (custom, culture), for instance, is seen not as a monolithic set of customs that are valid for all of Meratus society, but as something that can vary between households (61, 128–29). Using Freeman’s and Hepell’s discussions on *adat* as a foil, Tsing at first seems surprised about “the degree to which debate and disagreement are ordinary occurrences” and about the fact that “leaders compete to build and rebuild constituencies which, yet, are constantly dissenting” (151–52); these things, though, are true not only in the Meratus Hills but everywhere else. *Adat* may indeed be “hallowed,” but this does not mean that among the Meratus, or anywhere in Indonesia, change is impossible. The problem here lies, not with *adat*, but with notions scholars have that it is some sort of immutable law rather than simply a set of principles for negotiating the transactions of daily life. *Adat* must indeed be “continually reinvented,” i.e., adapted to current and changing circumstances; like culture anywhere, it “creates only a contextually specific moment of consensus” (152). This is an important insight that could be applied to most of the phenomena discussed in the book. Relations between government officials and the Meratus, between the Meratus and the Banjar, as well as between the individual Meratus themselves are indeed part of an ongoing discussion. The Meratus are caught in a set of relationships with the outside world in which they seem to be disadvantaged, yet, by reinterpreting the various aspects of the wider world presented to them, they are able to incorporate these into their image of order and thus retain a sense of themselves as a people. How long they will be able to keep this up is, as Tsing points out, another question (301).

The Meratus live in scattered settlements of a few houses around impermanent shifting fields. This is quite unlike what the government wants, which is to have them all live in settled villages with single-family dwellings headed by a male, i.e., the pattern found on Java and among the Muslim coastal Banjar. Since the Meratus have also not accepted Islam or any of the five religions recognized by the Jakarta government, they are, in the eyes of government agents and the Banjar, a disorderly, primitive people—a judgment that clearly reflects the power relationship between the dominant government and Banjar on the one hand and the Meratus on the other, and adds to their marginality.

One important aspect of Meratus life is travel. Because of the Meratus’s scattered settlement pattern the men, especially the shamans, move around a great deal, establishing social and political connections both within Meratus and beyond, gaining power from the esoteric knowledge learned on the outside. This again reflects the unequal power relationship between them and the wider world. Women, on the other hand, do not usually have such opportunities for travel, and are thus marginal to the arena in which men compete, being relatively disadvantaged in their access to the outside sources of power. Tsing describes a few female shamans who neutralize this relative disadvantage by traveling “inward” (235), gaining their power not through travel across a physical landscape but across a spiritual one. In doing so, one female shaman in particular, Uma Adang, seems to be taking on a more male role (270), which is interesting in view of the fact that male shamans are described as superwomen, i.e., women with penises (195). These inversions could have been analyzed further, especially in view of the larger Indonesian literature dealing with males who are female-like (Timor) and women who become male-like (Sunda).

Much more could be said about the book. The things I have mentioned were those that struck me as immediately relevant, and are, as Tsing would no doubt agree, my own construction of her account—an account that reveals Tsing to be a humorous and sensitive observer, one who sometimes brings laughter and sometimes sadness,

but who always conveys a sense of being involved with the Meratus.

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INDIA

AITHAL, K. PARAMESWARA, compiler. *Veda-Lakṣaṇa Vedic Ancillary Literature: A Descriptive Bibliography*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1993. vii+755 pages. Appendix of verse index. Cloth Rs. 750; ISBN 81-208-1120-8. (Originally published in 1991 by Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart. Not sold in Germany)

This masterly work, the fruit of extended research by a noted specialist in Indology, is in my opinion a "must" for any serious student of the Veda. An extensive manual of 755 pages, it includes a total of 1619 entries, together with an exhaustive verse index that covers each and every one of the metrical passages appearing in the many texts cited (these passages are, incidentally, the verses or paragraphs that occur at both the beginning and the end of the works described).

In his foreword, Wezler describes the *Veda-Lakṣaṇa* in (to use his term) its traditional sense, that is, as a group of ancillary Vedic texts of (South) India. He writes that though the texts were given their due share of attention by scholars both in India and the West from the middle of the nineteenth century until approximately the first half of the twentieth century, they have been virtually forgotten for about forty years.

This bibliography will no doubt greatly facilitate all manner of Vedic research, since it will obviously prove a highly convenient tool for obtaining reliable information concerning the existence and accessibility of essential scriptural material.

A brief perusal of the work reveals concise descriptions of the contents of the various texts followed by their call numbers; these in turn are spiced up with useful comments concerning their availability in public libraries and research centers throughout the world, together with various constructive references to relevant secondary literature. Often too the physical condition of the manuscript in question is indicated.

The scholarly erudition of the author himself is manifested from time to time in his various thought-provoking comments and reflections. For example, he notes while discussing the *Vaṛṇacchandodaivata* (number 1091 of the bibliography) that the name of the author is not mentioned in the manuscript, that the title is not clear, and that, despite the name, the *Chandas* and the *Daivata* are not dealt with in the available portion. He concludes from this that the title was perhaps based upon a misconstruction of the invocatory verses. In the case of the text entitled *Veda-Lakṣaṇa* (number 1186), he quotes Aufrecht's description of the title as "a feeble and mischievous designation of Vedic works," then himself concludes that far from being the title of a work it is merely a description of texts related to the Veda that were catalogued without further identification.

In certain works (such as the *Aniṅgya-Prakarāṇa*) the author provides detailed summaries of the contents of several volumes. Often too he draws attention to incomplete chapters or to individuals who either quoted a particular text or made reference to it in their own works; in several places he provides addresses, a fact that will certainly facilitate matters for the budding young scholar.