



Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Generations in Africa: connections and conflicts* by Erdmute Alber, Sjaak van der Geest and Susan Reynolds Whyte

Review by: Deborah Durham

Source: *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (December 2010), pp. 910-911

Published by: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40926196>

Accessed: 07-06-2017 15:11 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*

cosmopolitanism may have been constructive. Secondly, some essential elements of the unfolding cosmopolitan awareness necessitated greater discussion, in particular the negative and unintended consequences which result from well-meaning archaeological actions.

TIMOTHY CLACK *University of Oxford*

PADDAYYA, K. (ed.). *Formation processes and Indian archaeology*. vii, 294 pp., maps, tables, figs, illus., bibliogr. Pune: Deccan College, 2007. Rs 500/- (paper)

The editor of this book, a great luminary of Indian archaeology and theoretical archaeology, has, for the purposes of this volume, selected a galaxy of post- and pre-depositional archaeologists like Lewis Henry Binford, Michael B. Schiffer, and Carla Sinopoli; younger Indian authors such as Arati Deshpande-Mukherji, Richa Jhaldiyal, and B. Basak; older ones, like J.N. Pal, V. Jayaswal; and a few others who use their field-based studies to cast light on and bring their colleagues up to date with formation processes and Indian archaeology. Most students of Indian archaeology when they enter the Master's programme at Deccan College, to which this reviewer has a subsidiary affiliation, receive a thorough pedagogic grilling in field-based geomorphology, both practically and theoretically. Indeed, no fewer than thirteen of the authors in this volume hail either directly from the College, or were, for a time, affiliated with it.

In brief, *Formation processes and Indian archaeology* is about a theoretical patch-up, coming of age from the classical era of Indology, where theories of migration and diffusion were marshalled to explain similarities and differences in tool-types/kits across the country and not simply within a region of it. From this volume, it looks like Indian archaeologists have moved to landscape and regional frameworks to help explain and investigate the processes of site-formation, both prehistoric and historic. I have browsed and re-browsed the book but have in particular read the essays dealing with Bengal, two from Uttar Pradesh, and Vijaynagar, in Karnataka, and wonder if this does or does not do justice to the volume. However, as these are, I think, a somewhat representative sample, what do I really think and feel?

Well, I feel that the eminence of the authors ought to have moved them to consider extending their analyses of pre- and post-deposition beyond the realm of basic

observations (Basak) about aeolean, fluvial/pluvial centred displacements in tools onto some evolved statistical measures of these phenomena. Which would have suggested that they did imbibe something of Lewis Henry Binford's labours (with the 'French Mousterian of the Levallois Facies' article) of half a century ago, and would have helped them for once to break off from the Indological/Orientalist narratives of how many inches/millimetres a particular artefact moved (and in which varying direction) over a period of twenty or so years of repeated field visits. Field visits are of course welcome; however, a progressively refined set of observations regarding deposition and post-deposition, measured quantitatively, beyond elementary descriptive statistics, is welcome even more so. The time has gone when Indian archaeologists might have got away with giving their studies such titles as 'Preliminary observations on stone and bone displacements'. Overall, however, this book is a pathbreaking foray into a hitherto under-explored and very under-represented field of Indian archaeology.

AJAY PRATAP *Banaras Hindu University*

Childhood and youth

ALBER, ERDMUTE, SJAAK VAN DER GEEST & SUSAN REYNOLDS WHYTE (eds). *Generations in Africa: connections and conflicts*. 416 pp., tables, bibliogr. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2008. €39.90

Although there has been an outpouring of writing on children and youth around the world in the past decade, much of the most stimulating work has come from work in Africa. Child soldiers, thwarted promises of education and development, political upheaval, religious movements, and a bundle of new problems surrounding sex have led Africanists to question what youth or childhood means both in analytical terms and in local cultural worlds. Some of the freshest work situates those questions in exploration not just of the categories themselves, but in the relationships through which they take form and are negotiated, especially intergenerational relationships. This collection of sixteen papers along with a broad introduction, which grew out of an earlier conference, explores various

dimensions of intergenerational relations across the African continent.

The editors' introduction lays out the problems and potential in the term 'generation': the term has been used to talk about statically reproduced structures of descent, about society-wide cohorts produced through control of procession through a life-course (such as age-sets), and about the idea of historical cohorts which develop different orientations and sensibilities through (and themselves making) processes of historical change. In each of these approaches, the tensions between groups and the processes of succession are a source of dynamism and often cultural creativity, whether in the joking relations between mother's brothers and sister's sons or between grandparents and grandchildren, in the resentments and political conflicts between fathers and sons, or in the wide array of exchanges that ultimately knit together and distinguish groups in processes well explored in theories of reciprocity. The 'generativity' of generational relations is particularly significant as people negotiate and thereby shape political, economic, and cultural changes.

The editors organize the sixteen contributions into four sections: reciprocity, past and present, politics, and virtue. As might be expected from such a large collection of papers stemming initially from a panel at a conference, whose contributors come from all stages of their careers, and some of whom are more focused on the practical implications of their studies while others are more focused on theoretical implications, there is some unevenness in the contributions. A theme that runs through much of the volume (though with a particular focus in the reciprocity section) is the effects of markets and money on intergenerational relations. David Kyaddondo notes how children, who now can contribute cash to their households, also are empowered to demand service and negotiate prices in shops, contravening expectations of respectful behaviour towards elders: 'Today, even a two-year-old understands the value of money', people say (p. 36). In Zimbabwe, however, attempts to empower children in child-led organizations, giving them real leadership and management roles, stumble on issues of money, either because children haven't yet developed budgetary competencies, donors and banks don't trust children with financial management, or children might model their behaviour on self-serving politicians, according to Michael Bourdillon. Several of the essays

(again, not just the ones in the 'past and present' section) note a disruption of 'traditional' reciprocities binding generations together, through not only the advent of money, but also state interventions, shifting political movements, and new religious engagements. For some, the past is a nostalgic mirror to the present, to others it is corrupt and stifling, but in both instances the past is brought creatively into negotiations of current relationships – evidenced vividly in Koen Stroeken's essay on *bongo flava*, a Tanzanian rap form.

Perhaps not surprising to Africanists, many of the intergenerational tensions discussed in the book circle around grandparents, and especially grandmothers. Grandmothers often care for their children's children while those children are eking out bare survival in cities, or are developing relationships with new lovers or spouses. As Claudia Roth points out for Burkina Faso, and Erick Otieno Nyambedha for Kenya, if the grandmother works to support the children, the 'intergenerational contract' has been inverted, grandmothers assume parental authority, and men's roles in supporting women are also reversed. By contrast, as Gertrude Boden describes for Namibia, the state has taken on sources of elder's authority – access to health, education, and livelihood – giving young people a sense of liberation they link to post-apartheid independence, but also weakening elders' respect for the young. Other elderly women in Ghana find themselves lonely caretakers in migrant children's elaborate new houses, built far from supportive networks and known neighbours, poignantly described by Valentina Mazzucato. In a crisply argued paper on Tanzania, Mette Line Ringsted discusses how the life-course of teen mothers is the object of struggle and conflict between the young mothers and their own mothers, through issues such as childcare for the infants, expectations of youth's opportunities, and the (grand)mothers' own struggles for survival.

The volume as a whole, though the chapters are very diverse, makes clear the complicated relationship of generations to history. While people are formed in and by history, as the volume's references to Mannheim's theories of generational cohorts make clear, the papers also show how much history is made and remade in the context of intergenerational negotiations. Even as children, parents, and grandparents reshape their relational statuses, they rework the histories, past, present, and future, that are bound up with generational identities.

DEBORAH DURHAM *Sweet Briar College*