

worth noting that the methodological approach taken in the KASS project – combining ethnographies with a detailed kinship questionnaire – is not common in anthropological studies. Therefore, most of the chapters in the first part of the volume, which present survey results, might seem unusual to anthropologists and somewhat simplistic to other social scientists. Yet, it all makes sense in the complete picture, and the conducted analyses allowed the authors to construct a complex but coherent story about European kinship today. I am convinced that this volume – along with the previous two – is a “must read” for any social scientist who is interested in social interactions in contemporary Europe. Monika Mynarska

Hertzog, Esther: *Patrons of Women. Literacy Projects and Gender Development in Rural Nepal*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2011. 259 pp. ISBN 978-1-84545-768-6. Price: \$ 95,00

“... the book does not offer an alternative discourse or policy recommendations for gender development. Doing so would entail the acceptance of this concept, whereas the book’s basic argument is that such projects are all ultimately concerned with power manipulations rather than social change” (xvi).

This statement from the preface to “*Patrons of Women*” succinctly sums up the book’s aims and the author’s strong stance on “development”. Hertzog goes on to say that development and related terminology represent “an obsolete concept, a ‘non-word,’” calling “for the use of inverted commas” (3). Like Hertzog, I share many of these sentiments and have been influenced by postcolonial theory and the seminal work of Escobar, Pigg, and others on development discourses. However, the longer I work in or on development in Nepal, the more cautious I am about making sweeping generalisations from my experience on specific projects. What Hertzog’s book does well is to offer an in-depth insight into the “power manipulations” within a particular development project from her own perspective as one of these actors. However, what is more problematic is the author’s polarised black and white depiction of developer and developed, and her claim that this case study project represents “all” such projects in Nepal, as she frequently suggests: “[i]n this book I shall describe and discuss the inconsistency between the rhetoric and reality of gender development programs in Nepal” (33).

Hertzog went to Nepal in the summer of 1997 to work as a gender consultant for an Israeli irrigation company, Tahal Consulting Engineers. As she explains in the introduction, she started the study “in almost total ignorance of development and women in the country” (36). Written during the thirteen years after she left Nepal, the book records her consequent immersion into literature on postcolonial theory and development anthropology. She traces her growing awareness of how she had been constrained to act in certain ways within the Nepal project: “[o]nce I accepted the position of consultant in the women’s project, I was obliged to play the expert role that was indirectly imposed on and expected of me” (75). Examining

her multiple roles as bureaucrat/consultant, tourist, and researcher enabled Hertzog to question many of her previous assumptions and we are presented with a painfully honest account of her three months stay in Nepal. The account includes micro-level observations of gender, race, and caste hierarchies within everyday working in the project – particularly with regard to her own and her Israeli bosses’ behaviour. For anyone who has worked in Nepal, these incidents will be all too familiar – tussles over who sits in the front seat of the jeep, who serves tea to whom, lectures by Western and high status “experts” to local women and the scheduling of programmes around the needs of consultants rather than the participants.

The subtitle of the book is perhaps misleading for anyone interested in finding out more about literacy and gender in Nepal. Hertzog’s mission had been to set up literacy classes for 27,000 women in thirty villages followed up by vocational training – yet the book is really the story of why that did not happen. The nearest we get is the “seminar” (chap. 5) which is focused on the training programme for literacy teachers. As a literacy researcher and practitioner, I was disappointed that there was no detail of the curriculum (other than the frustrations of being unable to buy the books) or of teaching and learning processes. Hertzog had not actually attended most of the seminar so her account was much more about the logistics and the politics of organising the programme. I was struck instead by her detailed observation of the rituals associated with such training programmes, which gave real insight into how development discourses are constructed in actions as well as words. An example was the “persuasive and touching ... sight” of ten women, aged fifteen to over fifty, sitting around tables (180) and the ways in which students bargained over refreshments at the breaks. These vignettes seemed to convey the meaning of the seminar for these different actors – the women participants and the consultant.

This attention to the ways in which we construct discourses of development is particularly strong in Hertzog’s reflections on her role as a researcher. She talks about the “latent impact of watching people through the camera lenses” (36) and how her photographs “say as much ... about my own cultural assumptions and the latent stereotypical ideas I held about the places I visited and people I met, than they do about Nepali culture and ways of life” (42). The photographs are included in the volume, yet the captions give no details of what is actually happening, saying only “At a meeting with village women.” But “what meeting? which women?” I found myself asking. Conversely, moving to the written text, I felt uneasy about the level of detail provided, particularly the use of real names rather than pseudonyms for several key informants. The comments made about her predecessor, Tovi Fenster (not just by Hertzog, but also those reported by Leon, her boss) raised many questions around the ethics of naming people in this kind of critical account of aid.

Hertzog likens her book to “confessional ethnographies” (40) and there are certainly many times when she expresses guilt about her actions or words. She comments, for instance, “[l]ooking back on that incident it appears to

me that I might have felt guilty for using my visit to the villages for my own needs" (56): there is no doubt that this is "confessional" or "vulnerable" writing as Hertzog suggests, but is it an ethnography? There is much thick description of the interactions between Hertzog and her immediate (English-speaking) colleagues, and continuous reflexive commentary on her own behaviour and words. However, there seemed no attempt to move beyond the activities structured or focused around her role as consultant. For me, this resulted in a somewhat one-sided and introspective account – akin to autobiographical research – and lacking the multiple perspectives that emerge through ethnography. This relates also to the opening intention of the research text: how far is this about building and contributing to theoretical understanding, or rather, is it to provide evidence to support the starting hypothesis?

Even if she was unable to stay longer in Nepal, Hertzog could have gone much further in exploring the complexities of the intersecting tensions around identity, politics, and racism that she describes, through an in-depth comparative account of her parallel experiences in Israel. Though she touches on this connection – for instance in the comparison of the paraprofessionals in both contexts (53) or taking photographs of Ethiopian immigrants in an Israeli absorption centre (60) – she holds back from developing an extended comparative analysis based on her experiences and research insights outside Nepal. This would have helped to compensate for the inevitable constraints of being a short-term consultant writing at a distance of over ten years. This is an unusual account of a development encounter – "a game, in which Anita [Nepali counterpart] and I played the role of benevolent and professional persons in possession of desired resources" (167). It would have been even more interesting to explore how such development discourses and literacy programmes have changed and are changing in Nepal in response to some of the political and economic forces that Hertzog noted back in 1997. Anna Robinson-Pant

Hoffman, Danny: *The War Machines. Young Men and Violence in Sierra Leone and Liberia*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011. 295 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-5077-4. Price: £ 16.99

In "The War Machines," Danny Hoffman explores the devastating wars that unfolded in Sierra Leone and Liberia at the end of the last century through the experiences of the young men who became members of civil militias. Though these militias were initially organized to defend rural communities, they were eventually captured by the state. The government barracked fighters in the center of Sierra Leone's capital city of Freetown, where they waited for deployment. Through an analysis of the civil militia known as the *kamajors*, Hoffman argues that young men, rather than being rooted in a fixed history, were "up for grabs," and instead had their identities molded by global forces into violent laborers, or laborers of violence: what theorists Deleuze and Guattari describe as *war machines*. These collective laboring organizations draw on existing

social relations – rather than institutions – to create new forms of being and doing. Hoffman states explicitly that he is not explaining violence in local cultural terms, nor is he interested in a common academic project of seeing violence as a way of fixing identity, of drawing lines between self and other, in uncertain times. Rather, he situates Africa and African bodies within their global context, and analyzes the ways in which war machines themselves mold the identities of young people. It is a rich, beautiful, and provocative ethnography that challenges existing ethnographic theories of the violence of youth originating in mythic and historic forms.

Hoffman argues that the barracks – with its particular spatial, economic, and military forms of humans and their labor – is the organizing principal of West African postmodernity. Through the barracks we can interrogate and understand the creation of the war machine, where war and work are coterminous, "even identical" activities for young men (xi). As the war machine involves intimate fashioning of the work and lives of youth, it is forward facing, global, and rich with possibilities, both fantastic and terrifying. Within the metaphor – and literal existence – of the barracks, Hoffman argues that we can see African postmodernity as focusing on the rapid assembling of male bodies "for efficient deployment in the overlapping service of security and profit" (xii).

Deleuze and Guattari's principal of *plateaus* – the production of new forms of being rather than the reproduction of existing social relationships – is the organizing principal of the book's chapters, which fall in two parts. The first concentrates on the social histories of the *kamajors*, in which they ascend through three plateaus of social organization, and the second focuses on the building of the barracks; the result of the *kamajors'* final plateau, that of incorporation into the logic and structure of the state. In Part I, "Histories", Hoffman illustrates how the *kamajors* were a "novel force built from the material of existing social relations but put towards new ends and generating its own institutional logic as it evolved" (85), rather than being grounded in an existing social institution based in history and lore. As such, Kamajor identity exists in performance rather than institutional roots (56). In Part II, "Building the Barracks," Hoffman illuminates how the barracks became the *nomos*, or organizing principal, by which the *kamajors* were captured and deployed by the state (103). Cooptation by the state blurred the line between licit and illicit violence through the redefinition of the *kamajors* in the categories of the state, rather than their previous existence as loosely organized defenders of their communities (96).

Hoffman emphasizes the difference between social institutions and social relations in describing the *kamajors*, which he asserts are entirely new and not merely an extension of secret societies. He examines relationships of patronage as a force that – like the war machine itself – has been captured by a global logic of the flows of resources and capital, rendering logical the movement of the *kamajors* into the capital, Freetown. Hoffman sees the city as a space of creative manipulation and resistance for youth who want to avoid the traditional forces of patronage and