

Book Reviews

APOSTLE, Richard & Gene BARRETT (Eds.) *Emptying their Nets: Small Capital and Rural Industrialization in the Nova Scotia Fishing Industry*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992. xix + 396 pages, notes, bibliography, diagrams, maps. ISBN 0-8020-5894-9 (cloth), ISBN 0-8020-6831-6 (paper). \$65 cloth; \$ 24.95 paper.

This book is a report of a six year project which started as a collaborative investigation of the endurance of small fishing and fish processing enterprises in Nova Scotia. The group used various methods including surveys of captains, processing plant workers, and managers; financial analysis; historical inquiry; and participant observation and historical case studies. From its comprehensive theoretical overview and introduction to its detailed tables and case studies and final conclusions, the book achieves its goal admirably with unanticipated coherence and continuity given the number of contributors and the diversity of their topics and approaches.

The central puzzle of the work is to understand why small capital has not disappeared and to account for its resilience in the face of large capital and government policy. The authors identify three views on this phenomenon associated with three time periods: industrial dualism in the 1960s; dependency theory in the 1970s; and differentiation theory in the 1980s. Recommending an empirical approach, they suggest that 'sacred doctrines' 'be assessed in an open-minded fashion' (p. 12) and see no antipathy between dependency and differentiation approaches.

Neoclassical and Marxist dualists alike argued that large capital was dynamic and progressive, the center of change and growth while the traditional backward sector would inevitably wither away. In the face of the historical tenacity, unanticipated survival, and resurgence of small enterprises in recent times, dependency theorists argued that large capital used increasingly sophisticated transportation, information, and communication technologies to lower wage costs and increase labor flexibility by decentralizing and dis-integrating. This argument holds that while there are necessary affiliations between small and large capital, the relationships are unequal and exploitative though the earlier view of small enterprises as archaic or pre-capitalist persisted. Theorists of differentiation have held that capitalist production is composed of interconnected heterogeneous forms designed to insure regularized predictable flows of raw materials and markets. Small firms are flexible and adaptable to changing conditions by making quick decisions to use inexpensive and flexible technology with a willing labor force. Apostle and G. Barrett conclude this section with a discussion of the distinctive characteristics of fisheries enterprises.

In the next two chapters G. Barrett discusses the pre and post World War II history of the Nova Scotia fisheries. In the fourth chapter Apostle, G. Barrett, Davis, and Kasdan use surveys of managers to describe small, middle and large fish plants. While small plants confirm to the dependency picture of close association with large capital for inputs and outputs, competitive or middle sized plants illustrate differentiation with a diverse structure of supply and flexible production structure for multi-dimensional and seasonal harvesting. In the fifth chapter K.J. Barrett uses accounting methods to describe the financial characteristics of the three kinds of firms to conclude that all are similar in their high levels of risk, poor structures of capital, excess capacity, and variable operating returns. Small plants are variable from year to year with great excess capacity; middle sized plants have better capital levels with long term debts but manage production costs least well and have lowest profits; large plants have the worst capital positions and poorest cash flow and highest administrative expenses, disadvantages offset by their greater production efficiency which offsets higher costs to make them the second most profitable.

Apostle, G. Barrett, and Mazany discuss relations between processors and dealers in the northeastern part of the United States in chapter 6. In chapter 7 Apostle and G. Barrett discuss the variable relationships among different kinds of fishermen and processors. In chapter 8 Davis and Kasdan provide a local history and in chapter 9 Willett presents a community level description. Apostle and G. Barrett move chapter 10 to a more general level with a discussion of labor in the whole area. In chapter 11, Giasson gives us another local history and description. Chapter 12 moves again to a more general level when Apostle and G. Barrett discuss social and economic connections among plants, fishermen, and workers. Barber moves to the local arena again for a discussion of household budgeting in historical perspective. In chapter 14 Apostle and G. Barrett show how economic processes divide groups and fragment their political efforts and how differentiation among capital and producers provides a basis for a right-wing populist ideology of free enterprise and suspicion of government, corporations, and unions. An unattributed conclusion reviews positions and wisely abstains from offering 'a blueprint for resolving the confusion and conflicts that characterize the industry' (p. 321).

There are two areas of traditional concern in anthropology that are little noted in economics or sociology: the economic importance of 'informal' social and cultural relations such as kinship, gender, and friendship; and the dynamics of household economies. Since anthropologists have dealt with such issues, there is a body of useful and relevant theory and empirical findings, though no one person or even group can cover all extant theoretical and empirical possibilities with any degree of coherence and clarity.

The authors are attentive to the construction of gender and its importance. Throughout the book the various authors point out issues of gender and patriarchy and paternalism. These attitudes and predispositions at the same time facilitate smoother labor relations but also make for gender conflict in other settings.

The authors attend to other social relations as well. The book concludes that 'the ties between small capital and the communities in which it is situated frequently provide social and economic advantages that are overlooked in any narrow assessment of economic viability of small enterprises. Kinship ties, paternalism, and community networks are not easily or neatly incorporated into standard research designs, but studies that ignore these concerns will result in poor social science and even worse social policy' (p. 321). Recalling diverse research designs and reports of empirical work and theoretical reflection in the field of economic anthropology that elucidate this point, anthropologists will not find it problematic. Indeed, such factors are routinely incorporated into anthropological research design, as the case studies in this book show well, though such practice may be alien to economists and policy makers. The point deserves emphasis both because of its importance to anthropology and because of its practical importance to understanding fisheries. It is about time that researchers begin to take such factors into account as central rather than peripheral dimensions of the phenomena under study and incorporate them in standard research designs, whether this can be done neatly or not. This project is to be applauded for its progress in this direction and for recognizing and highlighting the conceptual and methodological issues.

Another conclusion is that 'many small businesses are family undertakings, and connections between kin structures and economic activities should be a central concern for future research. Family involvement gives small capital a flexibility that is not sufficiently understood and alters basic assumptions about rationality in economic behavior.' Again, most anthropologists will find in this conclusion an echo of Chayanov's conclusions about peasant economies and will recall debates and theoretical as well as empirical work that bears on the topic and may even provide a sufficient understanding of many of its aspects (see Durrenberger 1984). Here, the conceptual problem is to break out of traditional assumptions received from economists, an endeavor to which anthropologists are accustomed. But the authors are certainly right to emphasize this point because this is one job that remains to be done especially with regard to fisheries and the theoretical task of integrating the understanding of household economics with

ideologies, practice, and political/economic systems is a central issue in anthropology (Durrenberger and Tannenbaum 1992).

Though the book is ambitious in its scope it lives up to the initial aspirations by skilfully integrating critical theoretical thinking with detailed qualitative and quantitative data over a wide area, time, and range of occupations to characterize a fishery, explain its form, and describe how it got that way. This project has gone a long way to move the study of fishing beyond the boats and to take account of the larger economic, regional, and historical structures that anthropologists all too often ignore. These are the lessons anthropologists can profitably take from this book. In short, this group has made excellent use of abstract critical thought to elucidate the details of local empirical observations and has shown once again that Canadian social scientists are leading the way in the description and analysis of complex modern fisheries.

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KALLAND, Arne & Brian MOERAN *Japanese Whaling. End of an Era*. Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, Monograph Series No. 61. London: Curzon Press, 1992. 228 pp., notes, appendices, references, index.

This book is a polemic in defence of a characteristically Japanese activity, whaling, which, although it never provided for the livelihood of any more than a small minority, still provided a significant part of the diet of almost the whole population of Japan. I write deliberately in the past tense. When I was last in Japan, in the late autumn of 1991, I visited Taiji, the whaling port where Kalland and Moeran finished writing their book, and its time was past. Everywhere in Japan, whenever I asked for whale meat in local markets I was treated as almost hopelessly naive. Only in Kii-Katsuura, just along the coast from Taiji, did I succeed in my quest, but only in a souvenir shop for tourists, which displayed small, and expensive, cellophane wrapped packets, labelled simply 'kujira,' or *whale*. And yet Japanese of my generation grew up eating whale meat, which less than fifty years ago supplied 47 per cent of their requirements for animal protein (p. 90). The drastic decline of Japan's whaling economy can hardly be explained by a change in the consumption demands of the Japanese public. True the booming consumer economy of recent times has led to a change in tastes: the fact that beef, and other red meat, are now consumed on an unprecedented scale may certainly mean that whale is hardly missed, but it is equally true that many Japanese would gladly eat whale meat – a part of their diet for more than a thousand years – if it were available. It is not, and that is why Kalland and Moeran's book is essentially a work of historical anthropology: as such it presents not only the traditional whaling communities, but also a remarkable insight into Japanese culture and social organization at local level. The whales '...as gifts from deities, ... have to be fully utilized, for to do otherwise would be an insult to both deities and whales' (p. 152). The decline and fall of the whaling communities is inevitably tied up with urbanization. 'Farmers may believe in the inherent value of rice,

and young city people in salvation through McDonald's hamburgers, but whalers have whale meat. That is what sets them apart' (p. 156).

Why, then, has the Japanese government not defended the interests of whalers with the same dedication as it has those of the country's rice farmers? In terms of pure *realpolitik* it is a question of numbers. Where millions grow rice, only thousands ever hunted whales, at least in modern times. But the real answer is to be found in international pressure by *soi-disant* environmentalists, who have succeeded in having the public adopt the whale as a sort of totem for their cause (p. 6). The success of this campaign can be judged by looking at Plate 18, which displays the front page of London's *Daily Star* for Saturday, May 11, 1991. The first two sentences of the article should win a prize for tendentiousness: 'RAW whale meat was on the menu at a sickening dinner for Japanese VIPs. Hundreds of MPs and other guests tucked into the disgusting delicacy to protest at the worldwide ban on whaling.' The *Daily Star* describes itself as 'THE PAPER FOR WINNERS,' and the battle against the Japanese whalers had certainly been won by 1991. Since the 1985-86 season all commercial whaling has been banned by the International Whaling Commission. The fact that the real sufferers are not well-fed Japanese VIPS, but working men deprived of a traditional livelihood, is obviously too subtle to be grasped by the readers of the *Daily Star*. Equally to the point is the fact that the whales have not won either. Not one of the species taken by the Japanese in recent times is in danger (p. 5). Kalland and Moeran have shown themselves not only to be first class anthropologists, but have also written a book of great integrity: the world needs to be reminded that Japanese can also be the victims of injustice. Unfortunately the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies has not got the clout of the *Daily Star*. All the more reason, then, why anyone concerned for the truth should read this book.

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RAM, Kalpana *Mukkuvar Women, Gender, Hegemony and Capitalist Transformation in a South Indian Fishing Community*. North Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991. Asian Studies Association of Australia, Women in Asia Publication Series, 145 pp., ISBN 1 86373 137 7 and 1 86373 014 (paper).

The point is often made that women in fishing communities perform important social and economic tasks, and that their undeniable financial power and relative autonomy from men in daily life gives them considerable presence in land-based activities. During the long absences of men at sea, it is the women who shoulder much of the responsibility for the day-to-day continuity of family life and who maintain crucial social and economic relations. At the same time however, women the world over are excluded from the actual fishing activities, particularly at sea, and this makes for their being dispossessed from the main productive resources in the community. Dispossession is, however, not a simple negative exercise of power, but is compensated by other forms of empowerment in the domestic sphere, which is also the central focus of women's identity. This seemingly paradoxical situation, in which women negotiate their relative autonomy with their necessary subservience to the interests of the fishing men and their dependency on their income, represents a major departure from mainstream feminist theory, which has viewed women's status as being mainly associated to their productive roles. In her fascinating account of the lives of the women of the Mukkuvar fishing community of Tamil Nadu (South India), Kalpana Ram addresses the complex ways in which women try to resolve the conflicting cultural values that result from the unusual sexual division of labour that is typical of the fisheries. She hereby achieves a rare synthesis between the different strands of anthropological theory, and in particular between economy and

symbolic anthropology, and shows how symbolic meanings are subtly and constantly being contested and redefined in day-to-day practice.

The dominant perspectives of fisheries studies have concentrated on the sea-based male act of fishing and have hereby systematically excluded women. Though the past few years have witnessed a modest, but growing interest for women of the fishing communities, the relation between maritime anthropology and gender studies remains an uneasy one. A recent World Bank study on research needs in artisanal fisheries, for instance, merely lists the need for research on women's roles along with highly specialized male-centered topics, without disclosing why this type of research is not only long overdue, but essential to understand the wider setting in which the transformation of fishing economies is taking place.

The modest literature on women's roles has mainly been concerned with modern fisheries in temperate waters, while very little has as yet been written on women in the artisanal fishing communities of the South, which are now undergoing major transformations. Kalpana Ram's book therefore represents a major contribution towards understanding the processes at hand and in particular how they affect the lives of those concerned. Her study is particularly important in that it seeks to trace the transformation of artisanal fisheries within the world economic order and how the ideology of gender is deconstructed and reconstructed in the process.

Ram's analysis is a clear pointer that the workings of fishing economies and the way their culture is constructed, cannot be understood unless the complementary, land-based roles of women are also taken into account. Addressing a fundamental issue such as the escalating level of dowries, she links it to the heightened investments required by motorized fishing and the displacement of labour brought about by the commercialization of fishing. With the emphasis shifting away from the jewellery component of dowry towards cash, which is used to finance male ventures in gear, shares in motorized boats and overseas trips in search of employment, the meaning of dowry is radically being altered. The implications are ambiguous, not only for women, but for the welfare of the entire family. The cash remittances that men, as part-owners or labourers in motorized fishing or as overseas workers, hand over to the women, do not compensate for their loss of financial control, which was largely based on their ability to raise credit by pledging jewellery. In this way women witness the erosion of the subsistence economy which provided them and their children with a relative autonomy vis-a-vis the men, and bear the brunt of the costs associated with the formation of a male labour force for motorized fishing. The wage work many women now undertake does not compensate, in Ram's view, for the loss of domestic autonomy. On the contrary, it is often undertaken in competition with men, and therefore lacks the aura of legitimacy which allowed women to significantly expand their radius of action beyond the immediate confines of the house. Contrary to what western modernization theories have been assuming, women in wage work, though often significantly expanding the geographical radius of their activities, have indeed also witnessed a concomitant shrinking of the culturally legitimate female domain. An important reason is that the type of work that women generally undertake is experienced as extremely demeaning, particularly because it forces them to interact and compete with unrelated men. In an effort to counter the loss of status implied by this forced interaction, women seek to replicate in the way they organize their work the safety provided by the domestic sphere, and this, in the end, ties them more firmly than ever to the four walls of the home. However, in her effort to generalize, Ram fails to visualize that one of the effects of the transformation of women's roles is also undeniably a more marked social and economic differentiation. In the light of the rising dowries, one may start questioning whether the dispossession of women from the means of production is indeed a valid proposition for all women, and in particular for those belonging to the wealthier fishing households. Conversely, the fact that motorisation dispossesses also men, and reduces them to a de facto wage labour force, may also shed another light on the significance of wage work for the autonomy of the poorer women.

Mukkavar women is exciting reading, though its readability is somewhat lessened by the apparently random sequence of the chapters and the lack of a more general chapter that would have been of great help to the reader unfamiliar with the ethnography of South India. Essential information on Dravidian caste and kinship systems is now scattered over the various chapters, and this makes the book less readily accessible to the wider readership. This notwithstanding, Kalpana Ram's is a sophisticated and thorough study, which is as yet unique in its kind. It contains a wealth of data, ideas and insights that are highly inspiring to anyone working on allied themes. Particularly to maritime anthropologists the book is recommended reading.

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TANAKA, Masakazu *Patrons, Devotees and Goddesses. Ritual and Power among the Tamil Fishermen of Sri Lanka*. Kyoto: Kyoto University (Institute for Research in Humanities), 1991. xvii + 228 pp.

Until now most of the case-studies published on Sri Lankan fishing communities have focused on the economic and social aspects of these societies (e.g. Alexander 1982, Bavinck 1984, Stirrat, 1988). The present book under review, which takes religion as its central theme, is a welcome extension to the existing literature. In 1982-'83 the Japanese anthropologist Tanaka carried out fieldwork in Cattiyur, a Sri Lankan fishing village with a predominantly Hindu population. During his stay he analysed two important Hindu festivals, the Bhadrakālī festival and the Draupādī goddess festival, focussing on the political dimension of these festivals. As he himself formulates it: 'This book is designed to present the relationship between religion and power by focussing on two dimensions of meaning, personal and cosmological, in Hindu rituals, and their political function to legitimate the power structure in the village' (p. 19).

Cattiyur is situated about seventy-five miles north of Colombo. 97,1% of the Hindu inhabitants belong to the Karaiyar caste. The population is heavily dependant on fishing with beach-seine fishing being the dominant fishing technique.

The main festivals are sponsored by two kinds of patrons; the Karaiyar caste as a whole, represented by the Cattiyur Hindu Temple Administrative Committee, and individual, rich net-owners.

The Bhadrakālī festival, held for ten days, is a non-Brahmanical festival. Bhadrakālī is an ambivalent goddess. On the one hand she is the Mother Goddess, the guardian of the village, at the other she is conceived of as fierce and dangerous. She is able to possess villagers as she is closely associated with epidemics. During the festivals Bhadrakālī is symbolically transformed from a fierce and dangerous goddess in a benevolent one. The climax of the festival is the slaughter of a goat on the tenth day. The goat can be understood as representing the evil in Bhadrakālī herself. The killing of the animal then means the victory of Bhadrakālī over her own evil aspects. Thereafter she is no longer dangerous but benevolent and protective. The festival ends with worship, the patrons getting the first sacred offerings from the priest.

The Draupādī goddess festival, which lasts twenty days, is a typical Brahmanical festival. It is based on the life of Draupādī – who changes from a suffering woman into a victorious queen – as told in the Mahābhārata epic. Draupādī is less fierce than other village goddesses and she is considered to be pure. From the first day onwards various rituals are performed of which the abhiseka is of a special importance. Abhiseka is a consecration ritual designed to generate divine power. It is sponsored by a patron who is

infused with divine power during the ritual and transformed into a sacred figure. The climax of the festival is the fire walking on the eighteenth day. Participants walk across the fire in trance for purification and union with the goddess.

The political function of both festivals, in Tanaka's analysis, is to legitimate the political structure of the village, the politico-economic domination of the wealthy sector, and to affirm the social order. While the political function is less apparent in the Bhadrakālī festival – the patrons are singled out as a group just at the end of the festival – it is much more explicit in the Draupādī goddess festival. The abhiseka ritual gives the opportunity to wealthy men, who are able to meet the expenses of the whole ritual, to legitimate their position by turning their economic power into sacred power.

In his book Tanaka gives a detailed description of the two festivals and a very interesting interpretation of the symbolical meaning of the various rites and processions which take place. By paying attention to the cosmological meaning – 'the narrative basis (mythes, episodes, symbolism) on which the festivals are structured' (p.18) – and the personal meaning, as well as to the political function of the festivals he presents a complex analysis indicating that rituals work in various respects.

Some criticism, however, can be levelled, especially against his analysis of the political dimension of the festivals. He criticizes structural-functionalism for picturing a society as being harmonious and in equilibrium, ignoring social differentiation and conflict. As a result – and here he cites Bloch – structural-functionalism '...account(s) little for the dynamism of reality, replete with social and ideological conflict, and...[has] great difficulty in explaining social change' (p. 14). But he does not really seem to be able to transcend this paradigm himself. He does indeed account for social differentiation in the community but sees it as legitimated by religion. In this way one gets the impression of a, no doubt, unequal society, but still harmonious with every member accepting this inequality. And so the criticism he expresses on structural-functionalism can as well be applied to his own analysis; i.e. difficulties in explaining social change (festivals affirm the existing order) and difficulties in taking the existence of social conflict in a community into consideration (the function of the festivals is to legitimize the power structure of the village, to make members accept the inequality; in this way he actually negates the existence of social conflict or at least bypasses it in his analysis).

Another problem of his analysis is the gap which exists between the political function of the festivals and what actually was happening in the political arena of the village. According to Tanaka the political function of the festivals is to affirm the given social order and power structure. On page 51, however, we learn that, apparently, there have been changes in the power structure. Before 1980 the rich net-owners dominated the Hindu Temple Administrative Committee, the most important political institution for inter village affairs. Thereafter it was – like the Cattiyur UNP branch – taken over by educated, not yet rich but politically very active young villagers. In 1984, after Tanaka had left the village, the net-owners resumed their domination. Unfortunately Tanaka pays no attention to the relationship between these changes and the political function of the festivals. As a consequence the reader is left with questions like: what is the importance of the political function of the festivals, to what extent are they able to influence the actual developments in the political arena; e.g. is the political dimension of these festivals of minor importance to the outcome of the political structure compared with other forces; or should one interpret this dimension as being so influential that it helped to suppress the aspirations of the political youngsters who lacked this kind of legitimation? Answers to such questions – which would require including the political system in the analysis, thus demonstrating the actual political impact of rituals on society – would imply a fuller understanding of the political function of rituals.

In spite of these criticisms the book offers a very interesting interpretation of the symbolical dimension of the two festivals. Altogether, it represents a useful contribution to the literature on rituals and Hinduism in maritime communities.

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