

sions by assessing the Brahmin revolt in Golkonda in the latter half of the seventeenth century. The conflict between factions at court (Muslim vs Brahmin) and its effect on the Mughal threat literally at the door of the kingdom, is used to highlight the rigid, yet fluid over time, nature of the groupings, and hence identities, in seventeenth-century Golkonda.

*Xenophobia in Seventeenth Century India* is an exceptional work in that it analyses an aspect of early modern India which has not been researched very much. It raises important questions regarding group identities, for both the Europeans and Indians, and the conflicts which resulted as identities clashed at different times and in different ways during the seventeenth century. It also shows that "...these formations and divisions pre-dated colonialism" (262). The rise of patriotism, or proto-nationalism, is also assessed in the study. On the whole, this book significantly helps the reader historicise issues relating to identity and conflict, so common in modern India, in their early modern beginnings.

doi: 10.1017/S0165115310000197    Yaqoob Khan Bangash, *Keble College, University of Oxford*

Joseph Nevins and Nancy Lee Peluso, eds., *Taking Southeast Asia to Market: Commodities, Nature, and People in the Neoliberal Age*. Berkeley: Cornell University Press, 2008. 280 pp., ISBN 0801474337 (paperback). \$24.95.

Commodities are not a new topic, particularly in Southeast Asia, where production, consumption, and export have always been part of life, even long before trade with Europeans began. The contributors and editors of this book take a novel approach, however, concerning themselves with how and why commodity producing processes have changed in the region, particularly over the last few decades of neoliberal development. From the evidence presented in these essays, it seems that commodities have become increasingly central, not only to external views of Southeast Asia, but also to Southeast Asian self-identity and how they themselves see the roles of nature and people in their own societies.

The editors take a clear Marxist approach departing from the point that "the social relationships and therefore the politics of production processes are often obscured by a focus on, and fetishization of, the end product" (2). It is all too common, they remind us, within our consumerist world to focus on commodities as "things", halting analysis at exchange value rather than unpacking the relationships that produce them.

The introduction gives a thorough theoretical overview, linking the foundations of state violence in Southeast Asia to the growth of capitalism. Here, the important distinction is made that, while commonalities of oppression exist across the region, it is the production of resistance that often differentiates one site from another.

The book is arranged in three parts. The first section, "New Commodities, Scales, and Sources of Capital" contains the strongest work with a fascinating variety of case studies. It opens with a new essay by prominent anthropologist Anna Tsing. Tsing uses two divergent case studies—the Korean logging company Kodeco in the forests of Kalimantan and the refugee collectors of the Matsutake mushroom in the Pacific Northwest of America—to expand the metaphor of "friction" laid out in her earlier writing. These two cases demonstrate contrasting ideologies of forest labour, showing that there is no global corporate standard in the commodity chains of which they are part, but that value itself is "shaped and contested" through the friction that generates it (28). Tsing clearly illustrates a global connection that is absent from purely economic analyses. This requires a great deal of imagination to identify in the first place but is ultimately undeniable.

Also in this section, Angie Tran's study of Vietnamese garment industry workers is focused on a process she calls "decommodification", where workers "fight publicly to regain their sense of dignity and human decency" (58). She argues that place-based identity, gender, and cultural bonding combine in southern Vietnam to build powerful worker networks which are able to fight locally for their rights within the peculiar market socialism of contem-

porary Vietnam. Strategically turning to state-established instruments of propaganda, such as the labour newspapers, these workers offer a compelling example of the specificity and complexity of countermovements. This case is differentiated from others in Southeast Asia by pointing to the often contradictory ways Vietnamese workers “embody socialist ways of seeing and being” as well as the specific legacies of Vietnam’s history on its relationship with its labour force, global market forces, and international cultures of factory production.

The final chapter in this section, “Worshipping Work”, looks at ESQ, or Emotional and Spiritual Quotient training, a program of “spiritual reform” at the state-owned Indonesian steel conglomerate Krakatau. Rather than seeing steel and religion as separate commodities, Daromir Rudnyckyj focuses on spiritual reform as a particular form of globalisation, enhancing steel production by combining the tradition of Qur’anic recitation with global management knowledge. Rejecting the hysteria of “islamisation”, the author outlines the historical context of Islam, which was introduced to southeast Asia as an integral part of a busy commodity trade. Religion, he points out, has never been external to the market. He describes the phenomenon of ESQ as part of a general trend to insert “religion into a pattern of commodity production that is reconfigured from one that is defined by the boundaries of the nation to one defined more by transnational connections and neoliberal norms” (76).

While the following sections of the book are less exciting overall, each contains standout essays. In Part II “New Enclosures and Territorializations”, David Biggs, “Water Power: Machines, Modernizers, and Meta-Commoditization on the Mekong River” considers the impact of early French and American modernisation efforts (the people, machines, maps and designs) on today’s large scale dam projects. Biggs describes the process as “*meta-commoditization*, a building of intellectual and physical infrastructures that permits both contemporary and future creations of commodities often regardless of reigning political ideologies” (109). Biggs argues that the processes of metacommoditisation, often built upon earlier development footprints, have produced the site specific relationships between human communities and technologies that, although largely invisible, continue to commodify the Mekong River in networked rather than linear ways. Drawing on actor-network theory (ANT), he argues that these relationships are often more significant than governmental upheaval or large scale global projects.

In Part III, “New Markets, New Socionatures, New Actors”, Peter Vandergeest also questions linear approaches to commodity chain analysis in his paper “New Concepts, New Natures?”. Vandergeest takes the site of Satingpra in Southern Thailand and compares the development of two commodified industries, farmed shrimp and palm sugar, challenging research methods that neglect to consider the shifting production, networks and landscapes of these intertwined histories. As well as presenting fascinating case studies, Vandergeest reflects on terms such as “socionatures”, and methods such as “commodity chain analysis”, to unpack how a place is shaped by not only the changes it experiences, but the lenses through which we attempt to understand those changes.

The individual essays in this volume are all accessible and well written and the level of research impressive. The subjects of the essays, from mushroom pickers in the U.S. Pacific Northwest to steel workers in Indonesia are treated with respect, showing that they not only embody the commodities of Southeast Asia, but that they are “producers of histories, geographies, social relations, and ‘Nature’”(225).

*Taking Southeast Asia to Market* emerged from a conference and thus opens a series of new questions. Connecting the threads that tie together the multiple questions in this book—and in the field more broadly—is largely left to the reader. At first glance, it may be challenging to see the chapters and sections being connected beyond a regional approach. As one reads more deeply, however, it becomes apparent that there is more collectively addressed here than an assemblage of different commodities. Through these studies, what is bought and sold all over the world begins to emerge as a dynamic web of often intimate relations, constantly contested. This volume joins a very current discourse reevaluating nature’s rela-

tionship to the social, and certainly encourages further scholarship in the area of globalisation, development and the environment. Rather than defining parameters of such scholarship, the diversity of topics covered goes to show that understanding commodities in Southeast Asian requires a basic acknowledgement that they are continually produced by an infinite number of intersections between people, ecologies and concepts of nature and culture.

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Anand Pandian, *Crooked Stalks: Cultivating Virtue in South India*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009. 325 pp., 33 halftones, 4 maps. ISBN: 9780822345312 (pbk). \$23.95.

If you pick up *Crooked Stalks* expecting a study of an Indian rural caste—a fairly standard sort of work with the usual anthropological and sociological dimensions, broadly historical in its approach—you will find it is all of these things as well as a discourse on the entwined subjects of desire, restraint, and morality in a particular Indian community within the changing context of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial identities. Anand Pandian, a professor of anthropology at John Hopkins University, draws upon two years' fieldwork (2001-2002) in the agricultural villages and towns of his native Madurai District, an intimate knowledge of the nuances of the Tamil language, and a sound command of primary and secondary literature, spanning many centuries, to skilfully piece together a coherent, well-grounded, nuanced, and highly relevant work that is, moreover, so well written that you may find yourself wanting to read the book thoroughly and carefully, cover to cover.

Few academic works begin with the author running from the village where he is conducting fieldwork to the site of a suicide. *Crooked Stalks* opens with an Indian graduate student, pursuing a Ph.D. in agriculture, lying dead on the floor of a hovel within the bounds of a dismally failed forest plantation in the Cumbum Valley of Tamil Nadu, in southern India. Pandian had spoken with the deceased man only a short time earlier, and informs us of rumours flying about in the wake of his death—that he had been led astray by age-old temptations strewn in his path by watchmen employed by the plantation, men of the Piramalai Kallar caste: “brandy, cigarettes, and prostitutes” (2). The researcher hears these lurid details from another watchman, a caste-mate of the men who allegedly lured Rajesh Kumar to his untimely end.

Thus does Pandian, with a simple vignette, set up the themes of *Crooked Stalks*—modern capitalist agrarian development within an increasingly globalised economy, on the one hand, and on the other hand the long-standing, delicate balance between *kāttu taram* (“savagery”) and *kuṭiyāraṇavan* (the good, agrarian citizen). These latter two terms, in Tamil Nadu, are derived from the age-old juxtaposition of traditionally non-agrarian, upland castes like the Kallars and Maravars and settled cultivators of the irrigated lowlands—the former representing pride, violence, theft, and disorder; the latter submissiveness, peace, morality, and order in the south Indian scheme of constructed social archetypes.

This juxtaposition of “savage” and “civil”, and the identification of savagery with Kallars, may be seen in early Tamil literature such as *Cilappatikāran*, the well-known epic of the late Sangam Age; the *Tirukkūal* of the 6th century CE; and in the *Atticūṭi* of Auvaiyar, of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The Saiva devotional text *Tirumanṭiram*, for instance, “describes the senses as *kallar* bandits lurking within a wide forest and threatening to waylay the soul on its passage toward oneness with the deity...” (115). Pandian argues that during this pre-modern, formative period in which scholars such as Burton Stein and David Ludden have seen the synthesis of a Tamil peasant culture, intimately connected with networks of temples and religious movements, virtue was directly linked with the activities of cultivation, and with the careful habits of the landowning castes that dominated lowland villages.