

Brower, Barbara, and Barbara Rose Johnston (eds.): *Disappearing Peoples? Indigenous Groups and Ethnic Minorities in South and Central Asia*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2007. 275 pp. ISBN 978-1-59874-121-6. Price: £ 17.99

This attractively produced book includes twelve case chapters: four on South Asia (the Raika of Rajasthan, the Bhil – actually about the Narmada dam displaces, the Tharu of Nepal, and a synthetic chapter about peripatetic peoples); six on northern Pakistan and Afghanistan (on the Dom of Hunza, the people of Kashmir, the Hazara, the Wakhi and Kirghiz, the Badakhshani, and the Lezghi); and two on Tibet (on “The People of Tibet,” one on the Minhe Mangghuer). Most of the chapters take a simple “peoples and cultures” view, with an outline of livelihoods, numbers, a section on “threats to survival,” a section on “food for thought,” and concluding lists of other sources, films, websites, organizations to contact, topped off with a series of questions to think about. The whole would be suitable for high school students, or possibly first-year undergraduates.

Perhaps the most interesting contributions to the book are by Aparna Rao, who died while the book was in preparation, on peripatetic peoples and on Kashmir. Both her chapters ignore the “one tribe, one culture” presupposition that underlies the rest of the book, though neither directly challenges it. The format of the book means that the reader is nowhere made aware of the constructed and processual nature of identity, even though one contributor, Arjun Guneratne on the Tharu of Nepal, has written an exemplary ethnography in this mode (*Many Tongues, One People: The Making of Tharu Identity in Nepal*. Ithaca 2002). The Herderian framework, the lack of any systematic approach to minorities in the two regions treated, and the brevity of the contributions, mean that the book will be of limited use for more advanced students, though perhaps helpful as a first port of call for those seeking material on one or other of the groups described.

David N. Gellner

Chevron, Marie-France: *Anpassung und Entwicklung in Evolution und Kulturwandel. Erkenntnisse aus der Wissenschaftsgeschichte für die Forschung der Gegenwart und eine Erinnerung an das Werk A. Bastians*. Wien: Lit Verlag, 2004. 465 pp. ISBN 978-3-8258-6817-8. (Ethnologie, 14) Preis: € 35.90

Marie-France Chevron has written a book that is less an intellectual biography of Adolf Bastian than an extended discussion of the persistence of fundamental questions about the human condition and the virtues of interdisciplinarity. There is surprising little material in this book about Bastian’s work in museums, the impact his twenty-five years of traveling and collecting had on his thought, his obsession with material culture, his close and influential collaboration with colleagues and friends such as Rudolf Virchow, or his intellectual debt to people such as Alexander von Humboldt. Indeed, Chevron makes little effort to engage other scholars who

have written extensively on these topics. Instead, she approaches Bastian from his most well-known pronouncements and uses her explication of his fundamental theses as a means to argue for new (or rather old) approaches to the study of humanity and human history in the academy today.

Drawing on a selection of Bastian’s publications, Chevron provides readers with an excellent introduction to his thought and to his most salient ethnological ideas. She pays particular attention to his notions of *Elementargedanken*, or “elementary ideas,” and *Völkergedanken*, the unique patterns of thought in which he argued that those “elementary ideas” materialized within different cultures. Bastian stressed that every group of people shared these “elementary ideas,” even though they were never directly observable. Such ideas were hidden behind humanity’s cultural diversity, which he argued was historically and geographically contingent. He also argued that by studying the unique historical development of different groups of people, and placing those results into a comparative framework, scholars could gain a better sense of those elementary ideas, which in turn would lead them to an improved understanding of the fundamental character of the human being and what he called the “psychic unity of mankind.” Ultimately, Bastian argued, this could also lead to an enhanced understanding of the social and cultural challenges that he and other Europeans faced during their lifetimes, and perhaps, solutions.

After cogently explaining Bastian’s notions of *Elementar-* and *Völkergedanken*, and relating them to his idea of geographical provinces, Chevron uses those explanations to clarify his contributions to ethnological thought in general (although she spends almost no time on the origins of his ideas). She underscores the intellectual debts that Leo Frobenius and Franz Boas owed to Bastian, and the fact that E. B. Tylor read Bastian’s work with great interest and profit. Despite that influence, however, Bastian’s challenging, and many would argue, confusing writing style helped to obscure his contributions to the broader history of anthropology. So too did the efforts of a younger generation of ethnologists, especially Bernhard Ankermann and Fritz Graebner, to draw attention to themselves by juxtaposing their own diffusionist theories to a reified version of Bastian’s ideas. In order to correct the resulting misinformation, Chevron goes to pains to demonstrate that Friederich Ratzel, the founder of “Anthropogeographie”, overdraw the distinctions between his work and Bastian’s ethnology during the late nineteenth century, and that Ankermann and Graebner continued to overdraw those distinctions after Bastian’s death in 1905. Because Bastian lacked a direct intellectual heir eager to champion his ideas after his passing, those misinterpretations became part of anthropological lore, taken up and perpetuated by other ethnologists, such as Robert Lowie in his influential “History of Ethnological Theory” (1938).

These are not original observations, but for readers interested in the broader intellectual trajectories of anthropological thought in the German-speaking world,