

lates closely to disciplines like sociology and political science, it is regretful that so few references have been made to sociological and political scientific work. That said, this is an innovative work within the discipline of social anthropology, which offers no works with such an overview.

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**Gravers, Mikael** (ed.): Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Burma. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2007. 283 pp. ISBN 978-87-91114-96-0. (NIAS Studies in Asian Topics, 39) Price: £ 16.99

Burma or Myanmar, as the country is officially called, is a multiethnic state. Though no trustworthy census has been taken since 1931, one may estimate that roughly two thirds of the country's 55 million inhabitants are ethnic Burmans (Bamar) who mostly settle in the valleys of the Irrawaddy and Sittang Rivers in the heartland of Burma. The outer regions bordering India, China, and Thailand, comprise two thirds of the country's territory and are inhabited by a wide range of ethnic minorities. The media focus on the confrontation between the military (*Tatmadaw*) regime and the democracy movement led by Aung San Suu Kyi – both are dominated by the Bamar – distracts our attention from the “ethnic” dimension of the political conflict in Burma. “Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Burma” is thus a most welcome contribution not only to our understanding of the current situation in this important Southeast Asian country, it also enriches theoretical discourses on ethnicity and nationhood. The volume contains seven papers which were presented in September 2002 at the International Burma Studies Conference in Gothenburg, Sweden. The fourth paper, written by the distinguished linguist and anthropologist Frederic K. Lehman (Chit Hlaing), was originally conceived as a critical commentary of the other conference papers but later expanded to a stimulating, brilliant article on “Ethnicity Theory and Southeast Asia, with Special Reference to the Kayah and the Kachin.”

The editor, Mikael Gravers, is a Danish social anthropologist who has written extensively on the Karen and on nationalism and ethnicity in Burma. In his book “Nationalism as Political Paranoia in Burma” (Richmond 1999), Gravers discussed the historical processes which made the ethnic divisions in Burma escalate into political violence haunting Burma for almost five decades. Gravers's introductory article reflects on the contradiction between state power and ethnicity in Burma. While the present-day Burmese army is dominated by Burmans, the colonial army contained whole regiments of Karen, Kachin, Chin, and members of other minority groups. The British deliberately “constructed” the ethnicity of various linguistically and culturally heterogeneous groups, such as the Karen, in an effort to counterbalance Burmese nationalism. The military government tries the other way. The official list of 135 “races,” i.e., ethnic groups, in today's Burma tends to downgrade the importance of the large minority groups such as the Shan and Karen by splitting them in many

smaller ethnic groups. Thus, ethnic classification is highly politicised as Gravers observes: “The discourse of ethnicity connects the individual, the group, and the state in an existential struggle of representations. It is, however, very important to emphasize that ethnicity in itself does not generate violence” (6).

Gravers explores in detail the politics of ethnicity in precolonial Burma where ethnicity did not play a very prominent position in society. Non-Burman *min laung* (pretenders to the throne) usually concealed their ethnicity (Mon, Karen, Shan, etc.) in an attempt not to alienate potential supporters from the Burman majority population. But there were instances when ethnicity counted. For example, in 1757, when the future Burman king Alaunghpaya launched a campaign to conquer the Mon-dominated Pegu kingdom in the south, “he appealed to the local Burmans to side with him against the Mon and the Karen (but not the Shan)” (10). In colonial Burma, however, ethnic classification became more rigid. The British based their concept of ethnicity on natural and primordial differences. This legacy still influences perceptions of ethnic diversity in modern Burma. Gravers discusses in detail the prospects of a new Panglong initiative, which was proposed, in 1994, by leaders of various minority groups forming a so-called “Ethnic Nationalities Solidarity and Cooperation Committee.” The Committee debated whether a new federal Burma should be structured on the basis of the eight main ethnic groups (“created” under British rule) or accommodate the aspirations of all 135 officially recognised “races.” Gravers fears that the obsession with ethnicity, which characterises the discourse of nationalism among minority elites, will lead to an impasse. He concludes that “[n]ationalism and ethnicism have evolved into a political paranoia under which every move has become suspicious” (27).

Mandy Sadan's essay is on the construction of the ethnic category “Kachin” under British rule and in the postcolonial state. The author points out that “Kachin” is not a self-referential term of identity. It is definitely not an indigenous term: “Even when a corpus of more than a quarter of a million lexical items is examined, the term ‘Kachin’ is found not to appear at all” (45). The only term which may be considered an indigenised equivalent of “Kachin” is *Jinghpaw amyū ni*. Roughly translated as “‘roots and branches’ of the Jinghpaw,” this term evokes a “concept of the multiplicity of clans and lineage segments” (53 f.). Sadan stresses the crucial unifying role of the Church and Christianity for the self-identification of the Kachin as one single and coherent ethnic group in present-day Burma.

The third contribution, by Sandra Dudley, deals with the reshaping of Kayah (Karen-ni) identity in the Thai exile. Dudley collected numerous interviews with members of the 22,000-strong Karenni refugee community in Thailand. In her theoretical framework Dudley follows Anderson and Gellner's assumption that ethnicity was not important in the emergence of nationalism outside Europe prior to the “colonial constructions.” She views the emergence of a Kayah ethnic identi-

ty as an ongoing process heavily influenced by the knowledge of and attitudes towards the outside world (103).

Lehman's concise article also deals with the Kayah. Traditional Kayah society was modelled upon the Shan society. As Kayah rulers had Shan titles, Shan nationalists claim most of the Karen and Kayah lands as their own territory. Lehman argues: "the Kayah considered themselves to possess specifically Shan-style principalities for the purpose of dealing with the outside world, but for internal purposes considered their leaders to be only religious-charismatic 'chiefs' and not actual rulers" (112). Less convincing is Lehman's suggestion that if a powerful state invents an ethnic category for certain communities, the latter might end up in thinking of themselves in such a category. He refers to the Yi people in Yunnan as a case in point. However, the case of the Dai, another of the officially recognised nationalities (*minzu*) in Yunnan, might be different. The Tai Lü in Sipsòng Panna and the Tai Nüa in Dehong do not consider themselves as members of one and the same ethnic group.

The geographer Karin Dean discusses the emergence of a Kachin political-geographic space. She follows Robert Sack's concept of human territoriality which defines territory as "a bounded, organized space or area whose boundaries are controlled by a certain kind of power" (125). The author opens new horizons in her study of how territorial and symbolic borders are interconnected. Kachin concepts of territoriality collide with those of the Shan who historically formed the ruling class in areas that nowadays belong to the Kachin State of Burma. This state was carved in a way which left numerous non-Kachin groups, notably Shan, within its boundaries. Shan nationalists even consider the whole Kachin State as part of their own historical realm. In her excellent discussion, Dean makes a misleading statement (129) that 14 per cent of the population in the autonomous Dai-Jinghpaw subprefecture of Dehong were ethnic Shan (Dai). In fact, the Tai Nüa, as the "Chinese Shan" are also called, make up about 30 per cent of the population in that region.

Ashley South contributes an interesting study of Mon nationalism. Though Mon and Burman identities were well-established before the arrival of the British, Burmese nationalists tend to deny a separate Mon culture and ethnicity. Even General Ne Win, who claimed a mixed Mon-Burman ancestry, denied the need for a Mon tradition that was in his eyes fully incorporated into Burmese national culture. A similar denial of a separate Mon identity was made in August 1991 by the then-SLORC chairman, General Saw Maung (160). South discusses at length the difficulties of an emerging civil society in the Mon minority areas after the ceasefire. Quoting Martin Smith, the author concludes that the implementation of minority rights, including those of the Mon, very much depends on an overall democratisation of Burmese society, a demilitarisation and the strengthening of civil society being "vital bridges in achieving reconciliation in the country" (172).

The following article by the Japanese social anthropologist Takatani Michio analyses the conditions of Shan identity with special reference to the Shan in the Kachin State. Many towns in the Kachin State and the western part of the Shan State bear the syllable "Mo" (or Maing) in Burmese which corresponds to *moeng* in Shan (Thai: *müang*). The author gives a fascinating explanation of the etymology of the term "Kawsampi" or "Ko Shan Pyi" meaning the "Nine Shan States" (182). Notwithstanding the question who borrowed the term "Ko Shan Pyi" from whom there remains hardly any doubt that "the symbolic number nine is a key to ethnic identification of the Shan and Shan Pyi for both the Bamar and the Shan" (187). As Michio observes, Shan bilingualism in the Kachin State is much higher than in the Shan State. Would that indicate a higher percentage of non-Shan in the Kachin State who have turned to the Shan language in a slow but steady process of "Shanisation"? The Shan, for whom religious (i.e., Buddhist) and ethnic identities are inseparable, appear as one of the most vigorous nationalities in Burma who are strongly determined to preserve their ancient culture.

Picking up other contributors' discussion of how ethnic identities were shaped by religion, Lian H. Sakhong discusses the role of Christianity in the making of a Chin ethnic identity. For the Chin, who are divided into dozens of subgroups, the rich oral tradition consisting of folksongs and myth was always of utmost importance, certainly more important than the writing system introduced relatively recently by Christian missionaries. The reinterpretation of old myths, including the traditional Chin concept of a Supreme God, *Khua-zing*, accompanied the gradual transformation of the belief system to Christianity "as an integrating factor in the development of Chin self-awareness" (222).

In the concluding chapter Mikael Gravers analyses the role of religion in the formation of a Karen ethnic identity in Burma. For the Christian Karen, Christianity became part of their ethnic opposition against the Burmese who were seen as representatives of Buddhism. The conversion to Christianity was not a single event but "a long and gradual process of adjustment to the demands of the new faith as opposed to old ritual habits" (207). Building upon the preceding contributions, Gravers comments on the role of religion for Kachin and Chin nationalism noting an important difference: While the vast majority of Chin and Kachin (80 and 90 per cent, respectively) are nowadays Christians, the case of the Karen seems to be more complicated. Only an estimated 15–20 per cent of Pwo and Sgaw Karen have embraced Christianity, and a probably higher number of Karen are Buddhists like the Burmans. Unfortunately, Christian missionaries considered Buddhism as an essential element of Burmese culture and political despotism, while Burmese nationalists associated Karen nationalism with Christianity and colonialism. The massacre of Papun during World War II, when almost 2,000 Karens, who had sought sanctuary in a Church, were slaughtered by Burmese nationalists, marked a turning point in Burmese-Karen relations. As religion seems

both to unite and divide the Karen, Gravers finally asks whether there is an alternative path leading to a pan-Karen identity. He argues that such a path might be possible “provided that the Karen knowledge tradition is liberated from the political discourse of nationalism and ethnicism” (253). How this is to be achieved remains unanswered.

“Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Burma” is an important contribution to understanding the ethnic factor in present-day Burmese politics. It is also highly recommended to students of other multiethnic societies in Southeast Asia and outside the region.

Volker Grabowsky

**Gronover, Annemarie:** Religiöse Reserven. Eine Ethnographie des Überlebens in Palermo. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007. 229 pp. ISBN 978-3-8258-0395-7. (Forum Europäische Ethnologie, 10) Preis: € 19.90

Auf der Suche nach “ihrem Feld” reist die Ethnologin Annemarie Gronover im Februar 2001 nach Palermo. Während ihrer 15-monatigen Feldforschung verfolgt sie das Ziel, religiöse “Reserven” des Katholizismus in ihren lokalen Ausprägungen und Funktionen zu untersuchen und dabei folgende Fragen zu beantworten: Wie werden religiöse Reserven gegen gesellschaftliche Destabilisierungsprozesse mobilisiert? Inwieweit erweisen sich religiöse Reserven als Überlebensstrategien? Bei der Forschung handelt es sich um eine im Mittelmeerraum verankerte “community study” im stadtnethnologischen Sinne, in deren Zentrum sich die katholische Kirchengemeinde SS. Trinità – la Magione (SS. Trinità La Magione) befindet.

Das Buch ist unterteilt in fünf Kapitel. In der Einleitung berichtet Gronover ausführlich über ihren Einstieg ins Feld, die Entwicklung ihrer Problemstellung und ihren ethnologischen Methodenansatz zur Datenerhebung und Datenanalyse. Mit Hilfe von teilnehmender Beobachtung, Aufnahme von Lebensgeschichten, Experteninterviews, Archivmaterial und Fotografie ist es Gronover möglich, tiefen Einblick in das soziale Leben der Gemeinde zu gewinnen. Ethnographische Beispiele verdeutlichen, wie sie als Forschende die Kommunikation und die Konstruktion sozialer Realität mitgestaltet und gleichzeitig von den sozialpolitischen und religiösen Lebensumständen der Gläubigen gesteuert wird.

Im Kapitel “Der Ort SS. Trinità – la Magione als religiöse Reserve” erörtert Gronover, dass die “Magione” eine besondere sozialpolitische, ökonomische und religiöse Rolle in Palermo innehat. Einer ihrer wichtigsten Akteure ist der Gemeindepfarrer, welcher die “historische Tradition der Basilika für die aktuelle gesellschaftliche Situation memoriert, mobilisiert und revitalisiert” (49). Durch die Erschließung historischer Ressourcen ist es ihm möglich, die Basilika als “materielle und ideelle Reserve” (49) strategisch einzusetzen, um Menschen und ihre Umwelt zu beeinflussen und zu stabilisieren. Dies wird anhand des Beispiels “Speisung der Armen” deutlich. Bevor die Ritter des Konstantinordens Nahrungstüten an die Armen des Viertels verteilen, verweist

der Pfarrer auf die wohlhabenden Zeiten der Magione im 12. und 13. Jh. Damals wurden mit Geld und ökonomischem Besitz Kreuzzüge geführt und Arme unterstützt: “. . . Magione war immer Teil des berühmten und reichen Palermo. Mansio, lateinisch, und maison, französisch, das heißt: Haus. Hierher kamen die Kreuzritter, um Station zu machen, zu schlafen und zu essen. Reisende, Arme, Kranke, alle kamen nach Magione, um Hilfe zu erfahren” (52). Indem der Pfarrer auf die historische Kontinuität der *mansio* verweist, ist es ihm möglich, den Gläubigen einen sinn- und identitätsstiftenden Bezug zur Vergangenheit und räumlichen Ordnung zu vermitteln.

Um die Mobilisierung und Nutzung der *mansio* als Reserve durch den Pfarrer und die Gemeindeglieder zu kontextualisieren, beschreibt Gronover die Stadtgründung Palermos, die historische Entwicklung des Stadtviertels la Kalsa im 9. Jh., die Ökonomie SS. Trinità – la Magione zur Zeit der Zisterzienser im 12. Jh. und die SS. Trinità – la Magione als religiöses Zentrum seit dem 12. Jh. Dabei weist sie darauf hin, wie “[d]as historische Auffalten der *Magione als Relief* und das Sichtbarmachen ihrer Brüche und Kontinuitäten verdeutlicht, dass an diesem Ort geschichtliche Ereignisse deutliche, die Erinnerung lebendig haltende Spuren hinterlassen haben. Die rituelle Bearbeitung dieser Spuren vermag die Wirklichkeit auf der Grundlage der Geschichte der *mansio* neu zu schaffen und zu ordnen” (67). D. h. Historisierung wird als rituelle Strategie verstanden, durch welche die materiellen und ideellen Reserven der *mansio* immer wieder neu generiert und abgeschöpft werden können.

Im Kapitel “Die Heilung von Menschen und die Sakralisierung ihrer Umwelt” beschreibt Gronover die innere Organisation der *mansio*, um aufzuzeigen, welche Angebote sie den Menschen macht. Beispielsweise sieht der Pfarrer eine seiner Hauptaufgaben darin, der in Armenvierteln lebenden Bevölkerung eine Alternative zur Mafia zu geben. Wie Orte als Reserven des lokalen Widerstandes in Anspruch genommen werden, wird anhand der kirchlichen Inbesitznahme der Piazza Magione und Kontrolle über das *quartiere* la Kalsa deutlich. Der Pfarrer etabliert zivilgesellschaftliche Räume im Elendsviertel, indem er die Piazza Magione neu gestaltet, Kirchen renoviert, Institutionen zur Armenhilfe und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit etabliert, sowie eine Gemeindezeitschrift und einen Fernsehsender gründet. Laut Gronover basiert die Sanierung und Revitalisierung des Viertels auf einem Tauschhandel zwischen dem Pfarrer und den Gläubigen. Der Führungsstil des Pfarrers setzt sich aus den Strukturen der Patron-Klient-Beziehung und des *big-man*-Systems zusammen. Der Pfarrer als Patron verwaltet und vermittelt heiliges Wissen in der Liturgie sowie in dem von ihm geschaffenen wirtschaftlichen Kreislauf (Arbeit gegen Solidarität mit der *mansio*), wobei seine Beziehung zur Bevölkerung dyadisch und asymmetrisch gestaltet ist. Charakteristisch für das *big-man*-System ist dagegen die Verwaltung des heiligen Ortes, welche dem Prinzip der Akkumulation und Redistribution materieller Güter folgt. Obwohl sich die Macht des Pfarrers nicht über die Anhäufung und Zurschaustellung von Reich-