

The very concept of the ethnographic fieldwork has been abused in this project. Singh states that an average of 5.5 days per community were spent by the investigator to collect data. The bulk of the data were collected from about five key informants per community. The places of fieldwork are also not mentioned. Any worthwhile ethnographic study, even in its new avatar of rapid ethnographic research, requires at least 6–8 weeks.

In the ultimate analysis, the reports look highly monotonous with a heavy recycling of old data and with only some cosmetic changes. It may be useful for administrative purposes to distinguish the communities for awarding some reservation benefits. The serious researcher hardly gets anything worthwhile from these reports.

Another anomaly can be found in the statistical presentation of certain data. It is stated that 'the percentages relate strictly to the responses made by the informants to the questionnaire (*sic*) contained in the schedule guideline (*sic*)...' (p. xvi). As already pointed out, the investigators were required to record the responses of only five key informants. What kind of percentages can be derived from these responses for communities with one lakh or more population? For example, how can the statement, 'education is favoured by 139 communities for girls and 167 for boys' be justified? Is five a representative sample for every community? (see pages 136–139 for such unscientific statements).

The volume under review contains a number of categories which are improperly defined. The designers of the project have failed to clarify certain key conceptual categories. The 225 communities mentioned in the volume are supposed to be endogamous groups. They also include communities such as Andhra or Telugu Brahman, Tamil Brahman, Tulu Brahman and Jains. These are not endogamous categories, but they are linguistic or religious demonstratives for certain clusters of endogamous groups. Another generic term Yadava is used for Maniyani, Erumakar and Gosangi. These three communities are different endogamous groups inhabiting different regions of Kerala. The reviewer hails from the place of Maniyani and hence can say with confidence that the descriptions given under Yadava are mostly not applicable to them. Maniyani were matrilineal with virilocal residence till 1956, the traces of

which can be found even today. It is mentioned that the Yadava community is spread over five districts, but in the map they are shown in three districts (No. 220 in the map and in page 1592). Some of the authors and the editors have failed to identify the endogamous communities among clusters of endogamous groups. Another anomaly is the inclusion of Jains under the community list. Jains have several endogamous groups in Kerala.

Discussion on linguistic groups, viz. Kannadigas, Andhra (*sic*)/Telugu and Tamils along with other communities makes no sense. Further, the issues discussed under these categories are mostly repetitive. Intricate issues of the linguistic minorities are not discussed objectively. There are also some contradictory statements, especially on Kannadigas and some irresponsible and false statements on Tamils and Kannadigas. They are described as immigrants in Kerala. Kannadigas and Tamils have been residing in the same place for centuries (both areas were under Madras Presidency until 1956) and they happen to be a part of the geographical unit of Kerala. Branding them as immigrants by the editors, is unjustified (p. xxv and p. xxvi). The author on 'Kannadigas' has rightly pointed out that 'Most of the Kannadigas in Kerala were there from time immemorial. In the past, the present Kasaragod area was known as Tulunad, meaning Tulu Land' (p. 572).

The listing of endogamous groups is still incomplete. At least one endogamous community, Hebbar Brahmins residing in Kasaragod district, is missing. There may be other communities also which could not be located by the ethnographers. Some endogamous groups are spelt differently in different pages (e.g. Bhillava in p. 269 and Billava in p. 1605).

The editors have happily accepted the cultural zones of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore (second map) made by colonial masters. There is no justification for continuing with these zones made more than hundred years ago. The cultural diversity of Kerala as it is known today, requires a better demarcation of cultural zones.

A statement such as 'some informants, however, reported the existence of a school where free mating is permitted and children are recognized as the group's', is a serious one and is not explored further. This again, is an irresponsible statement which should have been avoided in a scientific writing.

Finally, the reviewer feels that the outcome of the seven-year project is not satisfactory. Each investigator should have spent at least 2–3 months in each community to write an in-depth ethnographic account of about 100 pages. This could have been done within the time and budgetary provisions of the present project. Providing an ethnographic account on the communities of India should be an ongoing project of AnSI. The task may be assigned to the ethnographers by allotting each of them two or three districts. University departments of anthropology may also be invited to collaborate in this endeavour. The reports need not be published in the form of books, but can be made available in VCDs and DVDs.

These volumes could have been useful to the researchers, administrators, political leaders, etc. if utmost care was taken to provide authentic and reliable up-to-date information on each community. As it is, in spite of so many lacunae, people have begun to quote these volumes as evidence in support of their arguments in inter-community disputes.

However, in spite of the above criticisms, Singh needs to be complimented for initiating the work for which AnSI was established in the country.

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**Kenya Coast Handbook: Culture, Resources and Development in the East African Littoral.** J. Hoorweg, D. Foeken and R. A. Obudho. LIT Verlag, Hamburg, Germany, 2000, 527 pp. ISBN 3-8258-3937-0.

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The book under review describes the history and current status of the Kenya coast, and analyses from different basic, social and human scientific disciplines its resources, political and socio-economic transitions, potential for development and development limitations. It contains 28 chapters, and, following an introductory part, is divided into 'General background', 'People and History', 'Economic resour-

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ces', 'Human resources' and 'Development issues', followed by epilogue and annexes. Despite some shortcomings discussed below, this book has an encyclopaedic value for people working and living in Kenya in general, and in the East African littoral in particular.

The chapter on 'Marine resources' is far below standard and suffers from many systematic errors (e.g. generic *Pineas* and *Poxtumus* instead of *Penaeus* and *Portunus*). Also, the literature in this chapter is not up to date, and not up to international scientific standards. Although relevant as a literature source, references to grey literature (internal reports, newspapers, communications on symposia and workshops, personal communications) amount to more than 85%, indicating that no rigorous search in peer-reviewed scientific journals was attempted. Also the annexed general bibliography of the entire book is skewed towards social and human sciences. Although this is clearly mentioned, it reduces strongly the usefulness and quality of the bibliometric analysis in the chapter 'Kenya coast bibliography'.

As introduced in a preface by Ali M. Mazrui, this book in part overviews a series of paradoxes that constitute the coastal matrix of marginality, such as retarded education, colonization and auto-colonization, coastal Kiswahili as a political language versus the lack of coastal representation in the national power elite, and so forth. The description on the peoples and their (colonial) history is detailed and describes how particularly British policy destroyed the sociocultural settings and relationships of the coastal peoples and laid the basis for their fur-

ther economic marginalization by people from up-country after dependence, with coastal people currently owning only a third of the available resources in the area they live in. The British expatriated native land, and the bulk of agricultural labour was given to people from up-country. The lack of interest of local peoples from the coast in agricultural labour, tourism facilities and Western and Christian education, and the poor and discriminatory conditions under which they could potentially work for the colonizers, contributed to their becoming a minority in their own land, with the Swahili people hiding in their culture and religion as a consequence. In-depth descriptions of political transitions over pre-, during and post-colonial periods are excellent.

Notwithstanding the detailed and well-written analysis of historic and religious (mostly Islamic) settings, the authors confuse traditional practices with religious practices, particularly when dealing with gender issues. The use of the terms 'Islamic societies' or 'Arab culture' adds to this confusion. But even in unequivocal statements such as 'Under Islamic law...', the authors do not always get their facts right, for instance when stating the religious possibility to arrange marriages for girls below the age of puberty. Such statements of practices that have nothing to do with religion are rather insulting towards Islam, and many readers are likely to expect that the authors deal with such issues with greater care.

Maps and data in the appendices do not always address the expectations of a wide audience. For instance, election statistics of two years are given in great de-

tail, while data on natural resources such as forest extents are not given at all. Also in the mapped data (e.g. on ethnic groups), there is an apparent lack of detailed data from the administrative units within Mombasa such as Mvita, Likoni, Changanwe or Kisauni, which should have been presented as an inset.

District constituency maps with a gap of four years (1992–1997) are not relevant enough (only one change), whereas a larger time gap would reveal former districts to be united in the past (e.g. Kilifi and Malindi). Although this is indicated in the text at one point, the authors could have made more efforts to present mapped or tabulated data taking into account such changes.

The lacunae described above could have been easily avoided to raise the entire publication to an even higher standard. Nevertheless, the book reaches out to a large range of disciplines, and even more importantly, it succeeds in integrating them, aided by a good cross-referencing between chapters. The book is therefore recommended to scientists who seek to understand the Kenyan coast as part of their research, or as a moral obligation for other research activities within coastal environment. It also merits wide publicity to the non-scientific audience, as a book on the development of the Kenyan coast.

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