



Review

Reviewed Work(s): Garo and Khasi: A Comparative Study in Matrilineal Systems by Chie Nakane

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SRIVASTAVA, L. R. N. *An annotated bibliography on tribal education in India*. ix, 117 pp. New Delhi: Department of Adult Education, Tribal Education Unit, 1967

Tribal education in India is the report of the National Seminar on Tribal Education held at Udaipur in September 1965. Two themes run through the proceedings: (i) the devoted and concerned service of so many people in the cause of tribal education, and (ii) the background of sheer difficulty against which tribal education is carried on. There is ample evidence of government effort to raise the educational level of the *adivasis*, although there is substantial disparity between the States. The different ways in which different tribes react to offers of educational facilities vary even more, from an avid thirst for education, to indifference and even hostility; but here it is recognised that part of the task of tribal education is to make it worthwhile and attractive. The prospect of economic advancement is not always apparent to tribes in remote areas, and although economic loss to communities in which child labour is a vital factor can be offset by financial aid, the fact that so many schools are conducted by untrained (and sometimes disappointed) teachers, in languages which the tribal children do not understand, operates as a disincentive.

Recommendations include the greater use of tribal vernaculars at primary level, the creation of a career structure with substantial financial incentives, proper training for teachers in tribal schools and more research in tribal education as a discipline in its own right.

Taken together, these two publications provide a really useful contribution to the study of education for minority communities.

J. T. HAINES

NAKANE, CHIE. *Garo and Khasi: a comparative study in matrilineal systems* (Cah. Homme N.S. 5). 187 pp., plates, figs., maps, bibliogr. Paris: Mouton, 1967. 39 F

Two topics are dealt with; the results of field-work among the Garo and Khasi of Assam in winter 1955/56; and an essay in the typology of so-called matrilineal systems. For the Garo, the author lays emphasis on the marriage system in relation to the village community, for the Khasi, she deals with variations in marriage forms (role of the husband) resulting from the inheritance rules. In both ethnic groups she selects two villages in an area where traditional forms seem to have been relatively well preserved, and two others in border regions where modernisation has modified the pattern in different ways. Questions of social change and cultural diffusion, however, form but a marginal theme of the presentation and no effort is

made to trace or document, e.g., Khasi influence on the Garo system, or to compare the role of private landholding for the northern Garo on the one hand and the Khasi on the other. Since individual ownership of land even among the Khasi swidden farmers seems, via the inheritance rules, fundamentally to determine the family pattern, the assumption of a more primitive character of these swidden farmers in relation to the Khasi agriculturists owning permanent fields may be spurious. Again, the author evades these functional questions and rather prefers to point out the 'structural' differences within the limits of the organisation of kin.

Because of this limitation she has to treat questions of inheritance under the heading of descent (and not, as she would have it, vice versa) and thereby, inevitably, contributes her share to the confusion into which the descent theory has been manoeuvred by its proponents in recent years. We need not discuss here the question of whether it is legitimate to call the alignment of those who succeed to a title a 'household-lineage' or not—the very idea that a society has but one type of 'descent group' and that it will be possible to construe a typology of these groups and their interactions implies a fundamentally dubious approach. In any society there may be something which descends matri- or patrilineally, but since we no longer believe in matriarchal 'societies' we should take care not to accept matrilineal 'systems' as their substitute. Even in the restricted field of the transmission of material wealth, different objects may be inherited (or not!) in different ways. Those who inherit may, of course, be grouped together, but to divest other descent groups of their function (as Nakane does with the segmentary lineage of the Khasi), though complying with a better typology, may not contribute to our better appreciation of the facts.

LORENZ G. LÖFFLER

WOLF, MARGERY. *The house of Lim: a study of a Chinese farm family*. 148 pp., front. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968. \$2.45

Here is a little book of absorbing interest. With her anthropologist husband Mrs Wolf lived for two years in the family she describes; having achieved honorary status as a family member, she now qualifies to do so as an anthropologist. Her avowed aims in writing were to describe a family and to tell a story, and she achieves conspicuous success on both counts.

Having set the scene—Peihotien village in the area of Tapu market town (Taiwan), Mrs Wolf launches on a series of vignettes which are more than just character sketches. She