

**Stryker, Rachael and Roberto González (eds.). 2014. *Up, Down, and Sideways. Anthropologists Trace the Pathways of Power (Foreword by Laura Nader)*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books. 272 pp. Hb.: \$105.00/£65.00. ISBN: 9781782384014.**

As the world is being rapidly transformed, anthropologists are required to improve their methodology to deal with complexity and uncertainty and to move from the specific to the general. Anthropological concepts, such small, simple, “exotic” and “other” have been abandoned by as scholars struggle to make sense of the hugely complex and interlocking realities of today’s world. The essays in this volume are inspired by one key paper by Laura Nader, *Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from studying Up*; where, criticising the anthropological tendency to settle for the study of simple and marginal societies, she advocates for examination of power structures as they impact those at the bottom and at the margins. Rather than taking a one-dimensional view of reality, the “vertical slice” approach, of looking at each phenomenon as linked to the top and sideways, has been taken up by the contributors to this volume, in deference to Laura Nader’s work. Each of the ten chapters in this volume, address one key theme, mostly those not addressed by conventional anthropology. These themes are again divided into three broad categories of *Studying Wealth and Power*, *Studying Environment and Subsistence*, and *Studying Relationships and Bureaucracy*. A key concern running through all these papers is one of “indignation” (p. 7). In other words, these papers are not directed towards mere ethnographic description but take a critical stand against injustice and inequity and attempt to get to the roots of causes of sufferings of ordinary people. Hertz ( p. 64) offers a comprehensive definition of what it means to be “Up” and what it means to be “Down”; the former is when one’s decisions affect many others and the latter when one is affected by decisions taken by others.

The range of topics included in this volume is kaleidoscopic and addresses many issues of key concern, such as medical facilities, down policies, etc. The three papers in Part 1 are dedicated to the analysis of the internal working and ideology of the giant organisations that control the world. The papers includes one on the philosophy that dictates how debts and debtors are treated in the USA, where the doctrine of “personal responsibility” pins down the individual debtor but gives relief to the “corporate” debtor in the name of the right to make profits. The others deal with the role of the IMF in the financial crises in the South East and the manner of working of the ILO headquarters in Switzerland. Interestingly, while studying the working of the ILO, Hertz comments “society is shaped as much by drift as by decision”; in other words, the agencies themselves are controlled by their own bureaucratic procedures.

The second section is closer to popular anthropological discourses on the land rights of indigenous communities, dam building and the indigenous knowledge of food growing. Grandia examines the disastrous effects of World Bank policies on the indigenous Q’eqchi people of Guatemala, who were dispossessed of their land and living by the so-called agrarian reforms proposed by the World Bank. On a more generalised level, the plight of the Q’eqchi is shown as analogous to many other Third world communities, who face dispossession as a result of “plunder” by large corporations. Gonzalez

recounts another “modern tragedy” as the Zapotec people, pioneers of production of the crop maize, are marginalised on their own lands. NAFTA, in the name of development, pushed the interests of seed producing companies like Monsanto for whom corn was not a “plant person” but a commodity (p. 118). Pursuing similar lines, Urteaga- Crovetto, takes up the case of the Camisea project in Peru to show that increasingly the state is losing its sovereignty and giving way to the private profit-making players in the name of liberalisation. The states, ideally committed to the welfare of the people are now pushed into serving large corporations instead. What is touted as “national development” actually serves the interests of the few, often global, elite.

In the last section, in the paper on “caring”, the author, a nursing specialist and anthropologist, shows how the corporatisation of health care, and the transformation of “care giving” to a money-making venture from a “service”, impacts the ordinary patient who become “victims” of the large companies and profit driven ideologies of governance. This section has papers on the “global outsourcing of parenting” or the circulation of children through adoption that goes against the anthropological understandings of cross-cultural values of family life and children. While parents are flooded with enticements from adoption agencies that treat children almost like commodities, these parents also have their own agency and their ideas of what family means to them; such that the interaction is two ways, both up and down. Kliger’s paper deals with a completely new and probably very American concept of memory reconstructs as legal devices. At a more general level, it raises questions about what science is and how scientific is validity constituted, especially in regard to the objective status of truth. Another paper examines the disappearance of the Soviet Union that again puts a question mark on truth, as the very basis of identity constructions disappear overnight. What is up and what is down become problematic in situations in which power hierarchies are redrawn almost instantly.

These chapters confront anthropologists with a set of challenging questions on the scope of the subject and provide a guide for future research. One central contribution of this volume is to tell us that anthropology, as a humane science needs to be always concerned with the victims of this era of liberalisation. In a sense, anthropological concern with the marginal remains but to be understood in a broader methodological perspective contextualised within the larger power fields existing in the world. As most contributors have specialisations other than anthropology, it also brings out the interdisciplinary nature of the subject.

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