

analysed by Louis Dumont. In both cases, the hierarchy is linked to the distinction between status and power, and the pair is in a "hierarchic reversal" form of relationship. However, great divergences appear: on one hand, the Tibetan monasteries and hierarchs' economic life is not entirely comparable to the material dependence of the Brahmins upon their clients; on the other, the Buddhist king is somehow linked with the divine sphere (indeed, the idea of a strictly secular nature of the Hindu king, asserted by Dumont, is decried by numerous Indianists).

Martijn van Beek : *Identity Fetishism and the Art of Representation . The long struggle for regional autonomy in Ladakh*, Cornell University, 1996. 410 p., map, fig., tabl.

This study seeks to understand the mutually conditioning influences of a global hegemonic discourse of rights, rooted in contradictory imaginings of the world as populated by sovereign individuals and collectivities such as peoples, nations, tribes, communities, and state practices of resource allocation and access (globally, inter-nationally, nationally) and the complicity of (social) science in these processes. The study further investigates the links between this hegemonic grammar of identification, representation and justification, and the daily practices of people who seek to make a living under rapidly changing conditions, characterized by commodification and the (perceived) loss of decision making power to centralized institutions. It is argued that most social science and political practice suffer from identity fetishism: the perception that the social is comprised of a natural order of stable, unambiguously bounded, communities/peoples/cultures. Conceptions of justice and democracy are built on the principle of representation assuming a convergence between 'identity' and 'rights'; both multiculturalism and racism are rooted in this misrecognition of the nature of being and belonging, effectively producing the very difference that is supposed to be represented, and instituting a logic of fragmentation without end. The study uses the struggle for regional autonomy in the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir, India, as an illustration. In spite of the fluidity of lived experience and practices of identification in Ladakh, the most recent agitation after 1989 pitted Tibetan Buddhists and Muslims against each other. In-depth archival and field research of the conflict and its historical background carried out during prolonged visits over a ten-year period, shows that neither causes, nor form

of the agitation can be reduced to 'communal' differences. The dissertation shows that the historical transformation of the political economy of Ladakh and the production of certain normative frames of identification and justification offer important insights into the communalization of politics in the region, and suggests that such an approach would benefit understandings of 'identity' politics and 'ethnic' conflict elsewhere.

