recalls the classic carving charts in the ethnography of the Chin, and many subsequent reports. The annual journey of the Moso gods to Lhasa in order to gamble (p. 224) reminded me of the annual assembly of the Kinnaur deities on the local Mount Kailash. The *ddaba*'s method of divining, using cut twigs with (as it were) a heads side and a tails side (p. 218), has analogues among the Rai and the Nagas, and no doubt elsewhere. The ritual division of labour, often binary, is another interesting theme, and Oppitz assembles fifteen versions of the myth of a competition between two types of officiant or shaman (in Tibet typically a lama and a bonpo). But perhaps the richest theme of all would be the rituals themselves, especially the death rituals which, as is typical of the region, are far more elaborate than weddings. The chanted cross-country journey to the home of the ancestors, the white 'way cloth', the collaboration of lamas with local priests, the dough figurines and effigies of animals (perhaps substituting for animal victims), the use of horses for prestige, the elaborate laying out on the ground of offerings and ritual paraphernalia, the house gods and central pillars, the sacred groves, the careful written recording of gifts: all of these will be familiar to most Himalayanists. The editors have indeed provided plenty of food for the comparativist.

Multiculturalism: Modes of coexistence in South and Southeast Asia edited and published by Sasakawa Peace Foundation. Washington DC: Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 1999. 401pp.

Reviewed by Ursula Sharma

The bad news is that, as Ernest Gellner has taught us, ethnic nationalisms are in great measure a product of modern state formation. The good news (often obscured by the many instances of conflict in the contemporary world) is that none the less there are still many instances of peaceful ethnic coexistence, although these are seldom subjected to analysis by social scientists.

This book consists of ten clearly written and informative working papers, the product of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation's research programme on 'Culture and Identity: Ethnic Coexistence in Asia'. Three are on India, three on Nepal, one on Sri Lanka and three on Thailand. (No particular rationale is given for this choice of 'South and South-East Asian' countries, nor is there any editorial attempt to relate the papers to one another.)

Classifying the papers in a different way, some provide historical or general

accounts of the politics of ethnicity in a particular country. For example, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka's paper on 'Debating the State of the Nation: The ethnicisation of politics in Nepal' provides a historical overview of modern state formation and the role of ethnicity in this process, ending with a thoughtful discussion of the ways in which the negative effects of ethnicization might be averted. (Ethnicity, Pfaff-Czarnecka argues, must not be treated in isolation from underlying social problems which are common to most Nepalis, yet cultural and identity issues must have proper public debate and not be swept under the carpet; a quota system might enhance minority participation in the state, but would have to be preceded by proper political preparation.) As a reader who has limited knowledge of any of the areas covered apart from India, I found these general papers very helpful; they offered long-term perspectives on political and social processes in the countries concerned, together with sufficient reflective discussion to enable one to relate the specific case to theoretical discussions of ethnicity in the social sciences.

Other papers provide material on specific locations or arenas of ethnic differentiation. There is a paper by Arjun Gunaratne which compares the process of Tharu identity formation and the dynamic of Tharu-Brahman relations in two areas of Nepal, relating the political processes to the local organization of agrarian production and other economic factors. A paper by David Gellner takes the case of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley and makes explicit links with Baumann's work on ethnicity in Southall, London; among the Newars, as in Southall, there are linkages which cut across 'ethnic groups' and create complex local networks of solidarity and cleavage, so that the "modernist 'one and only one culture per person' model" can only lead to a dangerous polarization of ethnic identities.

In spite of the Sasakawa's Foundation's laudable objective of drawing out positive lessons from research into ethnicity, it is the problematic and conflictual aspects of ethnicity which dominate the collection. Reading much of this material, one does not hold out much hope that the process of ethnicization will do anything but accelerate. What are the short-term rewards for politicians who do not draw upon processes of ethnicization (directly or indirectly) for their maintenance of power? Can the clock ever be turned back where ethnicization of politics in Sri Lanka is concerned, and can the process of polarisation of ethnic identity described in Darini Rajasingham's paper ever be diverted? Yet several papers point to instructive models. Adria Tassy Prosser's paper on the Thai Chinese shows that, where a minority shares religion and other cultural traits as well as general phenotypic appearance with other groups, common educational institutions and intermarriage can create an accommodation. Thai Chinese have not been objects of the same hostility suffered by Indonesian Chinese. The role of education highlighted in

this paper suggests that British government policy is right in stressing the need to ensure greater inclusion of minorities in higher education, but misguided if it encourages further establishment of sectarian schools (this is my conclusion, not the author's). Two articles on Indian cities (by Ashis Nandy on Cochin and Shail Mayaram on Ajmer) suggest that old Asian models of urban cosmopolitanism existed which still survive. Mayaram's paper on Ajmer is particularly interesting as it identifies the specific local social processes which have contained conflict, e.g. the role of shared mythic space by different religious communities in Ajmer, the role of neighbourhood based panchayats in managing disputes so that they do not get inflated and ethnicized, and the role of medical pluralism in enhancing mutual participation in therapeutic traditions associated with particular religious cultures. Some of the early modern polities were characterized by ideologies of hierarchical complementarity in which the domination of the state by a particular class, ethnic, or religious group did not render other groups cultural or political 'outsiders'. Or, as Deborah Tooker's paper on Akha/Thai relations in Northern Thailand argues, earlier forms of complementary exclusion permitted an ethnicity which was not essentialized yet was based on a healthy self-other distinction. This is not to hark back to a golden age but it does bear out Ashis Nandy's contention that it is worth thinking about how non-secular modes of tolerance can be activated and built upon. After all, in many of these states the ideology of a political zone which is blind to ethnic/religious identities is (for the majority at least) meaningless, because their experience of participation in civil society does not support such an idea.

Perhaps this is not the place to discuss how realistic this idea might be in contemporary India. However I think it illustrates the kind of constructive questions that emerge when we go beyond the simple study of local processes of ethnicization (which anthropologists and sociologists have been very good at and have turned into a veritable industry) and dare to draw political conclusions. Not all the papers explicitly attempt this, but taken together they form a thought-provoking and instructive collection.

I would have liked to use this book for a course on ethnicity and globalisation which I taught recently; although the individual papers will be of interest and value to regional specialists they are also accessible to the non-specialist student. However this would be difficult in their present form. There is no editorial attempt to relate the papers together (even within regional groupings), the copyediting has been poor, and there are numerous typographical errors. Some papers could be substantially edited where there is overlap of content. However these do not claim to be more than working papers. The introduction suggests that Sage will publish them as a collection in the near future. This is to be warmly welcomed.