

Eastern and Gender History at SOAS, presents a concluding essay extending the political, social, religious and economic themes into the postindependence era. The book also includes notes on contributors, a glossary, an extensive bibliography, and an index.

The contributors have done an outstanding job of supporting the thesis that the Hadhrami diaspora is a determining factor in understanding the history of the Hadhramaut region. This is particularly clear in the analysis of the impact of foreign remittances on the economy of Hadhramaut, but discussions of domestic political development include the interference of Hadhrami mercenaries from Hyderabad, India, in the nineteenth century (pp. 43–46) and the role of Hadhrami expatriates in the twentieth century (pp. 58–60); the social status of the *muwalladin*; the specific role of diaspora religious leaders such as Salah al-Bakri and Ali Ahmad Ba Kathir (pp. 203–13) and more general diaspora influences (pp. 224–29) as transmitters of Islamic reform ideas to Hadhramaut, are only several examples of the many provided by the authors in support of the thesis.

While the emphasis is certainly the relation between the diaspora and the homeland, the book also makes important contributions to the whole field of diaspora studies and the newly evolving paradigm of area studies which focuses on population dynamics rather than physical geographic regions. Therefore, despite cautious claims that these are largely preliminary and cursory studies, the reader will find throughout all of the papers discussion on such issues as motivations for migration, geographic extent of those migrations, the social and occupational stratification within the diaspora, and the cohesiveness of the diaspora. All in all, *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars, and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean* is a valuable addition to the growing literature on the Indian Ocean region.

CALVIN H. ALLEN JR.
The University of Memphis

Quest for Power: Oppositional Movements and Post-Congress Politics in Uttar Pradesh. By ZOYA HASAN. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998. ix, 280 pp. \$24.94 (cloth).

The purpose of *Quest for Power* is to analyze why the UP Congress, once the focal point of that party's success both as a political movement and machine, began a progressive decline and fall that culminated in its virtual extinction by the end of 1990s. Though the text is burdened with occasional lapses into polemic, Hasan provides the reader with a comprehensive and thoughtful picture of how it all went wrong. If one could summarize in a phrase the problem as Hasan sees it, it would be that, like the dinosaurs, the UP Congress failed to adapt to a changing environment. In this case, the environment that needed to be adapted to was political and sociological. The political economy was undergoing profound changes, and with it the class structure of Indian society (both in the towns and in the countryside), and the UP Congress leadership didn't "get it" until it was too late. The result was that new political formations arose that did "get it," and consequently spirited away the grass-roots support structures upon which the Congress machine rested.

Once Hasan gets into the meat of her analysis, she commences with the usual polemical allusions to Mrs. Gandhi's demonic role in "undermining" the party's organizational viability. Fortunately she quickly moves beyond this bogey-woman

thesis to more compelling and convincing factors that may account for the Congress's eventual demise. The social composition of its leadership cadres is one such factor. From even before Independence and on into the postindependence era the UP Congress was a Brahman and Thakur operation, which made sociological sense because the demographic and economic realities in UP favored it. She notes that Brahmans represent a higher proportion of the total population than in any other Indian state. And Thakurs (along with Brahmans) had been UP's principal land-controllers until Zamindari Abolition, the Green Revolution, and the emergence of Charan Singh began to change things. This gave them a ready track toward gaining control of what was originally the only serious political game in town, the Indian National Congress.

The effects of these changes, Hasan declares, began coming home to roost by the time of the 1967 elections, as authors like Paul Brass, Harold Gould, and Lloyd and Suzanne Rudolph have noted, and ineluctably led to Middle-Caste political mobilization fed by the demands of the former tenantry that they receive access to the system proportionate to their numbers and economic importance in the postindependence agrarian system. Hasan's point is that the elite castes in control of Congress saw the emergence of the Backwards as a threat to their status pretensions and, most of all, their control of the party apparatus and its patronage system. When they denied access to Charan Singh and other emerging leaders from the Jat, Yadav, Kurmi, and Koeri castes, these leaders took their vote banks elsewhere and as they did so Congress began to bubble down the political drain.

Space does not permit an adequate account of how Hasan deals with the subsequent phases of the decline. She rightly shows that one effect of the Congress disintegration, as it lost its support among Backwards, Scheduleds, and Muslims, was the creation of a political vacuum into which the BJP and the Sangh Parivar rushed, on the wings of their "new nationalism" rooted in Hindu denominationalism. This produced a new nexus of class and ethno religiously structured competition (culminating in Mandal-Mandir) that yielded new party formations (the SVD, the BKD, the SP, the BSP, the BJP, etc.). This changed the face of UP (and indeed national) politics. And it is only now that the tattered remnants of the UP Congress leadership seem to be awakening to the message—if their performance in the recent general election, and the prescient critiques of fresh young intellectuals like Jairam Ramesh are any criterion.

What I think Hasan and other Indian commentators (like Rajni Kothari, Atul Kohli, Ashutosh Varshney, Kanchan Chandra, etc.) on recent trends in Indian politics miss (probably because their own immersion in the system makes them so impatient with the reptilian pace of change and reform in open polities) is an appreciation of the degree to which Congress's recent demise has not been caused as much by "elitism," "corruption," and "political incompetence" as by an ironical twist on its past success. It is really because the Gandhi/Nehru/Patel Indian National Congress so eminently succeeded in building a viable democratic political system for India that the nation has been in a position to accommodate the changes in economic and political structure which the open polity has facilitated, including the obsolescence and eclipse of the UP Congress itself.

Another point requires comment. I think more should be made of the fact that the BJP and its extensions deserve to be treated as the structural successor to the Freedom Movement with which the original Indian National Congress was identified. In her analysis, Hasan makes constant allusion to the many ways in which the BJP/RSS/VHP—combine built a symbolic/ideological structure that used politicized religion to universalize the mobilizational process as a means of cutting across caste

and class boundaries. This was the same methodology employed by Gandhi to cut across the many divides in Indian society. The difference was that Congress nationalism targeted the Raj as the all-embracing *raison d'être* for collective action whereas the Sangh Parivar has targeted Muslims, other minorities, and the secular state itself as the all-embracing *raison d'être* for doing so. There are now signs that the latter are on the threshold of going the same route as the Congress. That is, they started as a "movement" but in response to the compulsions of electoral politics have moved toward becoming a "machine." With this transition, a lot of the ideological luster has been wearing off the party as it has been compelled to make the compromises that all parties must make in the open polity in order to remain in power. That, as much as anything else, may be the reason why the BJP's dominance in UP has been showing signs of eroding, and has tended to oscillate elsewhere (e.g., Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan). Structurally speaking, it's probably becoming the next generation's version of the Congress machine which it replaced.

My criticisms notwithstanding, Hasan has given us an extremely important, detailed analysis of what befell the UP Congress as time and circumstances overtook it. It must be read by anyone seriously interested in this subject.

HAROLD A. GOULD
University of Virginia

The Sauptikaparvan of the Mahābhārata: The Massacre at Night. Translated with an introduction and notes by W. J. JOHNSON. Oxford World Classics. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. xlvii, 140 pp. \$10.95 (paper).

The tenth major book of the *Mahābhārata*, *The Sauptika Parvan*, *The Book of the Slaughter of the Sleeping Warriors*, is a complex and curious part of the epic. It describes the great war's last two spasms of violence, which complete the epic's tale of killings which have been deliberately and intensively couched in parental and filial terms (e.g., the war sees the Pāṇḍavas kill four quasi-fathers, and at one level it may be said they, guided by Kṛṣṇa, sacrificed their own sons—this is explicit in the case of Ghaṭotkaca; the tenth book turns upon Aśvatthāman's filial revenge against all Drupada's sons and grandsons and the counterrevenge of Drupada's daughter, the wife of the Pāṇḍavas). The war's final acts of violence are extraordinary—these are two of the epic's most eschatologically charged episodes—and they are couched amidst typical epic reflection and debate on human effort, fate, and Meritorious Right Action (*dharma*). Finally, this book also presents highly developed, self-conscious juxtapositions of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava themes.

W. J. Johnson gives us here a verse translation of the book's eighteen chapters and he provides it with sufficient explanatory support to make sense of the action. The introduction is generous and discusses the *Mahābhārata* without presuppositions while introducing a number of themes from contemporary scholarly interpretations (especially those of Alf Hiltebeitel and Madeleine Biardeau). The annotations are numerous, substantial, and helpful. In addition there is a brief note on the text and its meters, a book-by-book summary of the entire *Mahābhārata*, brief explanations of the epic characters who occur in this book, and a three and one-half page *Mahābhārata* bibliography. The translation is well enough supported that it could serve as a portal into the whole of the epic and its most influential contemporary interpreters. And a welcome portal it is, beyond the ones we are used to: *The Bhagavad Gītā*, which more