

Felix Padel and Samarendra Das. 2010. *Out of This Earth: East Indian Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel*. Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, 742 pp., ISBN: 978 81 250 3867 2.

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In September 2010, India's government shocked corporations and activists alike by denying environmental clearance to Vedanta Aluminium's proposed bauxite mine in the eastern state of Odisha (formerly Orissa). Felix Padel and Samarendra Das' sprawling but compelling tome, completed only six months prior, provides timely insights into the stakes of this decision. *Out of This Earth* narrates the local and global links between aluminum production, corporate financing, weapons manufacturing, and the suffering of communities in proximity to aluminum's mining and refining. The book tells this expansive story by following the aluminum itself, from its mining as bauxite deposits in rural areas of Odisha to the centers of finance and military control in the United States and Europe. Drawing on their own involvement in mining resistance movements among various indigenous or *adivasi* communities in Odisha, Padel and Das offer a portrait of a complex situation of tremendous cultural change and political-economic inequality in rural India.

Out of This Earth provides a global history of bauxite mining and aluminum production with a focus on politically and economically disadvantaged communities in eastern India. Two villages in Odisha that have been ecologically and socially torn asunder by the aluminum projects of Utkal Aluminium and Vedanta Aluminium receive detailed profiles. These local histories are linked to other affected communities worldwide through a global overview of aluminum producers' corporate practices and personal connections. The book provocatively juxtaposes military-industrial uses of aluminum in weapons with false claims about the local benefits of aluminum production. The book also describes other institutions involved in supporting mining-led "development," namely international aid organizations including the World Bank and Britain's Department for International Development. The authors document how these international organizations have influenced both local NGOs and state-level economic policies to support the aluminum industry. A condensed history of the multinational corporate form from the East India Company to contemporary Corporate Social Responsibility departments shows that such relationships between third-world development and corporate profit are far from new. Throughout, the book portrays these events in counterpoint to *adivasi* activism, providing a detailed account of resistance movements against mining in Odisha.

The experiences of villagers seeking ways to live in the shadows of aluminum corporations come alive in Padel and Das' telling. Unlike most literature on India's *adivasis*, individuals' voices are prominent, sharply intelligent, and historically situated. These details make for a rare history of India's rural

resistance movements, which typically escape written record entirely. The book thus provides a valuable archive of a troubling, transformative time in India's history, and the world's.

Some readers may dislike how *Out of This Earth* emphasizes the ecological-cultural wisdom of Orissa's *adivasis*. The integrity of social systems like kinship, the environmental wisdom of religious traditions, and the pure simplicity of life expectations among *adivasis* are described as the greatest losses wrought by the aluminum industry. The authors explicitly reject post-colonial critiques of cultural holism, arguing that such critiques threaten the well being of indigenous people. However, unlike implicit assumptions of cultural holism, by making explicit their beliefs in the coherence of traditional cultures, the authors raise troubling questions of how we can otherwise account for the kinds of loss they describe as "cultural genocide" (p. 245).

As a student of public culture in Odisha, I was interested in the authors' approach to accounts of political deals and corruption at the heart of the book, accounts that circulate as conspiracy rumors in Odisha. The anthropology of conspiracy talk has shown how it acts as a cultural form making sense of modernity, inequality, and violence. Padel and Das, by contrast, treat such talk as transparent accounts of corporate and government activities. As the authors are unable to provide official verification of such clandestine actions, this raises questions about scholarly knowledge in situations of extreme inequality: what sort of verification of reported events should scholars seek when official misinformation is a feature of the reported event? Though I expect there will be disagreements about the verifiability of some of *Out of This Earth*, anthropologists and historians will find the authors' faith in local knowledge compelling.

This book was written for a general, well-educated audience in English-speaking India, and is broadly accessible. But for the high import price in the United States and Europe, it would be an engaging addition in both undergraduate and graduate classes on indigeneity, mining, social movements, and global inequality. I hope it will nonetheless reach scholars in these fields, for they will undoubtedly find it informative, as well as passionate, frustrating, and inspiring.

———Katherine Martineau, University of Michigan

Donald Filtzer, *The Hazards of Urban Life in Late Stalinist Russia: Health, Hygiene, and Living Standards, 1943–1953*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 379 pp., \$110.

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The late Stalin era of Soviet history—the years immediately following the end of World War II (1945–1953)—once signified the quintessence of mind-numbing political conformity, cultural conservatism, and aesthetic drabness.