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Manosh Chowdhury

Making of the Popular

Production of Culture and Discourses in Bangladesh

SERIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

This book is firmly positioned in a defined location and very much aware of the intellectual-political meaning of the Global South. At the same time, it never moves away from the complex understanding of contemporary international scholarship. With the mix, Manosh Chowdhury provides a smooth yet critical reading of events in Bangladesh. He has a unique style of drawing the bigger picture with subtle nuances and punching with some 'un-academic' tones in academic writing. This book challenges the dominant notion of 'popular' in manifold forums and does it with some nuanced mastery.

Dr. Vesna Stanković Pejnović

Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade, Serbia

About the author

Manosh Chowdhury is a professor of anthropology at Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh. Over the years, he has taught undergraduate courses in photojournalism, media studies, literature, architecture, and archaeology. He has also written extensively in academic, polemic, and popular forums and has authored many books in Bangla. In addition, he has published seven anthologies of short stories and served on the editorial board of 'Depart', Bangladesh's first art magazine.

He earned a Master's in (social) anthropology from Bangladesh in 1990 before completing a PhD in cultural dynamics at Hiroshima University, Japan. However, his interests and work extend beyond disciplinary boundaries. While he has written many books in Bangla, he is best known in Bangladesh as an orator.

Summary

This book aims to illustrate how the 'popular' is not an arbitrary outcome as it is claimed to be, and how the project of constructing the popular functions as a web composed of different agents – governmental and state agencies, the media, corporate groups, development agencies, and the military with subtle nuances. Different agencies overlap in many aspects but work as a pact for making a national-popular. With specific references to Bangladesh, this book tends to illuminate how these agencies share similar missions and objectives, create spaces to collaborate with each other, and, regardless of specific disputes among them, maintain and manifest an oligarchic relationship. This is the flexible, yet definitive, location of the popularizing project – a 'cultural mission' of the ruling systems. It would deny a simplistic understanding of popular culture and posit the question of the popular within a complex web of social agencies in a particular space, at a specific historical juncture. Making popular here is integral to claiming populist credibility both as a cultural and political mission. It is cultural in the way the projects are launched and manifested and seek to reveal certain meanings. It is political in terms of configuring indoctrination over its subjects, mostly in the form of nationalist exhibitions. The project is becoming even more important for the corporate groups as it does not necessarily contest the state machinery but rather takes it as a 'de facto' ally.

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CULTURE AND DISCOURSES
IN BANGLADESH

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