



### Caste, Entrepreneurship and the Illusions of Tradition

Branding the Potters of Kolkata

*Geir Heierstad*

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**A striking ethnography of traditional potters combining caste with a modern business sensibility to respond to the rapid economic developments in urban India**

‘Through a meticulous ethnographic study, this book offers an interesting account of how caste identity and the potters’ craft of the Kumars of Kumartuli have survived in a competitive modern world of global capital. As there are not many serious academic studies on artisanal castes of Bengal, this book will be welcomed by scholars.’

–Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, Head, School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations, and Director, New Zealand India Research Institute, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

‘This ethnographically based study of the potter caste of Kolkata is a solid account that helps us understand how tradition adapts to globalization. It is also a loving account of Kolkata and its society.’ –Arild Engelsen Ruud, Professor of South Asia Studies, University of Oslo, Norway

This ethnographic study is an empirical exploration of caste through the story of Indian potters who have transformed caste into a marketable brand in the business of selling sculptures. To these contemporary potters, caste is in their blood, caste is about being a creative and independent artist, and caste is about business, as they engage in a competitive market to sell their artworks.

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### About the Author

Geir Heierstad is research director of international studies at the Norwegian Institute of Urban and Regional Research, and former associate professor in South Asia studies at the Department of Cultural Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo, Norway. Heierstad is co-author of *Indiske utfordringer* (Indian Challenges, 2014), and coeditor of *The Politics of Caste in West Bengal* (2016), *India’s Democracies: Diversity, Co-optation, Resistance* (2016) and *Demokrati på indisk* (Democracy Indian Style, 2010).

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