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Masculinity in Transition or Patriarchy Reasserted? A Study of Construction Workers in Sylhet, Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT Globally, understandings and experiences of masculinity have drawn significant attention and critique, generating lively academic debate and scholarship over the past several decades. However to date there has been relatively little such debate pertaining specifically to constructions and experiences of situated masculinities in Bangladesh. Going some way towards filling this lacuna, in this article we explore and articulate constructions of masculinities among and within the households of construction workers in Sylhet, Bangladesh. These workers – both male, and, to an even greater extent, female workers – are particularly situated in a relatively marginal position within Bangladeshi society in terms of their socio-economic, educational and cultural capital. Based on ethnographic research carried out with 40 female construction workers and 20 male construction workers and husbands of female construction workers in Sylhet, Bangladesh, we investigate constructions of masculinities in a patriarchal context which is undergoing rapid socioeconomic transformations.