
In 1986, football-loving Belgium celebrated its major achievement (fourth place on the FIFA World Cup, in Mexico, after having lost the ‘small’ final to Diego Maradona). Just before the tournament, however, Belgium suffered one of its most humiliating defeats, by losing one–nil against football dwarf Malta. Yes, it was but a friendly, and yes, it was in an experimental line-up in the preparation for Mexico, but nevertheless: beaten by Malta. In terms of underachievement, only Belgium’s recent World Cup campaign comes close.

Malta and football are the focus of a well-written, extensive, rich and history-wise ethnography by Gary Armstrong and Jon Mitchell, on the role of the game (or business) on a densely populated island quite literally at the fringes of the European Union. It is a fascinating work, the biggest strength of which also is its main shortcoming, in that sense at least that the authors miss a few open opportunities to give their ethnographic account more analytical and theoretical depth.

Malta, according to the authors, is obsessed by the game, even if the level of local competitions is poor and the results of the national team abysmal. Football permeates local culture, politics, ethics and economy. Yet, over the weekend the local stadiums remain empty, and a number of other sports or pastimes (such as hunting, or horse racing) attract a much bigger crowd. One of the reasons explored by the authors certainly is the globalisation of football: Malta is divided into Anglophiles and a pro-Italian faction, a division that also corresponds to the partitioning of the island into two competing political parties (or ethnies, to use the term the authors adopted from Baldacchino, as these political groupings also function as a moral community and a source of identity). Hence, local affiliations are expressed, among others, in one’s membership of the local Manchester United or Inter Milan fan club.

In nine chapters interlaced with many informative vignettes, Global and local football explores the role of football in the production of Malta as a nationless state, and in the production of a polarised political landscape. Football also shaped the material landscape: the intertwinement of politics and football was translated in infrastructure, and in the negotiations and frictions between the various parties involved (such as the British military and the Maltese population, but also the different antagonists at local club level). The rivalries between local clubs thus parallel the ‘big’ political rivalries, and big and small antagonisms feed on one another. Yet, Maltese football is not just ‘local’: the political ambition to become a full member of the European Union is mirrored in the Maltese window on European football. This reflects in the many fan clubs on the island (see above), or in the international import of cheap, mainly African, players (with the ambition or hope to once strike a lucrative deal by transferring them to a European top club). Also, it is translated in the ambition to professionalise, but also in the frustration after failing to do so. Like all sectors of life in Malta, football too is permeated by discourses of modernisation and bureaucratisation. But modernity is also distrusted: after all, the authors claim, their informants point out there is ‘a Maltese way’ that, over the centuries, has proven to work out in the particular context of the island and its history of successive occupation. This transpires, for instances, in the deep entrenchment of local notions of patronage and Maltese Big-Men in
local football. These Big-Men, often successful entrepreneurs obsessed by the game, also use football as a means to convert cash into prestige through managing the highly complex networks of reciprocal exchange that dominate Maltese football. This intertwining of local notions of status, convictions and practices with national politics and international business is the main idea that is developed throughout the book.

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Jean Bazin is probably one of the least known representatives of the generation of scholars that emerged in the late 1960s within a current of French anthropology critically engaged with structuralism, Marxism and ethnology. First trained as philosopher under Louis Althusser, Jean Bazin belonged to the group of anthropologists working in Africa who drew their inspiration from the sociologist Georges Balandier’s interest in the historical complexity of societies experiencing a ‘colonial situation’ (Balandier 1951). Recognised as a perfectionist in research and writing, but also deeply involved in teaching, governing his institution the École des Hautes d’Études en Sciences Sociales and the building of a research centre, Bazin published his work as articles rather than books. Only recently, after his premature death in 2001, has a substantial part of his writings become available through the collection reviewed here.

Divided into four thematical parts, the book is made up of seventeen texts (one unpublished and another including posthumously found material). Prefaces are provided by two of the author’s longstanding intellectual collaborators, the anthropologist Alban Bensa and the philosopher Vincent Descombes. Their assessments of Bazin’s achievements dwell on the fundamental issue reflected in the book’s subtitle L’anthropologie autrement, regarding the nature of anthropological and ethnological knowledge. For Bazin, ethnological approaches explain the behaviour of people through their belonging to an ethnic or cultural group and by revealing hidden meanings, for example, in the form of structures of thought or deep knowledge. Promoting otherness rather than diminishing it, their methodology of dividing-up humans according to certain criteria transposes the naturalist logic of classification of species to the social realm. In Bal des sauvages he argues that such a naturalist epistemology relates to supposedly a-political and a-historical societies held to be in an authentic state of nature offering unmediated access to ‘rules of exchange’ and the ‘savage mind’ in the case of Levi-Strauss, or freedom from domination with Pierre Clastres.

The alternative to such forms of othering, presented in the first article and most of the third part, is an anthropological approach seeking to know how people act in historical situations. If ‘any world is a variant of a series of worlds which necessarily include mine’, anyone can learn to act likewise (p. 49). Drawing inspiration from Wittgenstein’s theory of language games, difference is understood as the variability of sets of rules along which common human problems are dealt with. This includes the question of how to change the rules and what inherent limitations each kind of problem possesses. Although Bazin only elaborated this pragmatic anthropology in the last years of his life, all of the book’s case studies demonstrate it. This is perhaps why the thematical distribution of the chapters mixes his work on science with empirical analysis.

Carefully contextualised, eminently readable and providing meticulous attention to detail, the case studies deal with how people use ethnic identity (‘A chacun son Bambara’), define heritage architecture (‘Le chalet basque’), make and reproduce States (‘Genèse de l’État et formation d’un champ politique’),
‘État guerrier et guerres d’État’) and royalty (‘Le roi sans visage’, ‘La production d’un récit historique’), believe in spirits (‘Les fantômes de Mme du Deffand’), make ritual objects (‘Retour aux choses-dieux’, ‘Des clous dans la Joconde’), exchange (‘La chose donnée’) or collect (‘N’importe quoi’). Each of these studies instantiates the methodological and epistemological problems mentioned above, often discussing how their object was configured through ethnological analysis and what social effects this has. However, Bazin avoids the excesses of certain constructivist forms of critique, which, for example, consider ethnic identities as pure outcomes of scientific description or (post)colonial policies.

While it is impossible here to discuss Bazin’s substantial contributions to the political anthropology of the kingdom of Segou and the anthropology of objects, the fields he was particularly prolific in and to which two parts of the book are dedicated, I would like to conclude by emphasising two traits that may define their broader significance. First, be it as observer (explorer, colonial administrator, anthropologist) or as object of research (i.e. a contemporary art installation), in his work we are part of the universe of possible worlds under scrutiny, and analysis mingles the exotic and the familiar. Hence the book’s title Des clous dans la Joconde is the title of a study that considers Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa and a nail-fetish from Central Africa within a common problematic of how singular objects are made. Treating western and non-western worlds as contemporary puts an end to the de-politicisation of the other, places Bazin alongside Johannes Fabian and Nicholas Thomas, who likewise explored the possibility of bringing the subjects of anthropology into time, and relates to a second characteristic: an engagement with the political, as the way in which social spaces of dissensus and ambivalence historically emerge and people reflect on the existing order to change it. Convincingly applying an Aristotelian interest for man as ‘political animal’ to social analysis is what might best describe Bazin’s work and distinguishes him from someone like Pierre Bourdieu, who a few years earlier had also engaged in a critique of structuralism by theorising practice and the conditions of performance, but ended up positing a socially overdetermined subject.

Reference


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China is certainly not the first region to come to mind when reflecting about anthropology. During the first half of the 20th century it simply escaped the anthropological gaze and after the revolution access for fieldwork had long been limited for political reasons. Thus, in most national anthropological traditions, China still is very much an emerging field. Paradoxically, to some degree, the same holds true for studies on kinship. Originally one of the most crucial and noblest fields of the discipline, today’s anthropology of kinship is still trying to recover from the blasts received by David Schneider’s epistemological attacks in the 1980s. What anthropology studies as ‘kinship’ since then has undergone several re-conceptualisations, topical shifts and adjustments before it found its current form dealing with ‘relatedness’ or ‘connectiveness’ in a very broad sense of the terms.

Susanne Brandstätter and Gonçalo D. Santos’s thought-provoking volume manages to shed new light on both the study of kinship and the anthropology of China. The book is
based on papers presented at a conference on ‘Chinese Kinship and Relatedness’ at the University of Manchester in April 2006 and clusters around three major thematic foci: (1) motion, migration and urbanity, (2) intimacy, gender and power and (3) state, body and civilisation. The ethnographic examples cover different geographic areas of today’s People’s Republic of China as well as parts of Taiwan and late imperial China. The articles range from studies on rural bachelors to female homosociality and to questions of (grand-)parenting and education under the conditions of reproductive technologies and a rigidly enforced national single-child policy. Notwithstanding this extremely broad thematic scope, all contributors share a common approach to kinship as a set of idioms and shifting practices rather than as something static based on a single principle. Consequently, instead of reducing the field to questions of biology, genetics or alliance, the main focus of the volume is on the various materialities of kinship. These include natural substances such as blood or rice as well as social phenomena and practices like property, emotions, memory, labour, etc., or metaphysical concepts such as qi. This broad approach allows exploring the politics of relatedness as an active process of creating social ties and relating to people. It is thought of as something sharing many features with what has traditionally been labelled kinship but adding aspects that would have escaped the traditional notions of the term until only a few decades ago. Kinship (or materialised relatedness), in the broad sense that Brandstätter and Santos propose in their inspiring introduction, theorises transformation and malleability as its central qualities rather than trying to define a set of intrinsic features of which any actual practice must appear as deviation. ‘Chinese kinship’ then, instead of forming a tangible, well-defined unit, is characterised by the apparent paradox of constant change – somewhat comparable to the famous duality of yin and yang, which remains recognisable while it is constantly reorganising and reshaping.

At first glance, one might be reminded of a radical constructivist approach. Is kinship thus just another discursive practice with no roots whatsoever in the ‘real world’? None of the authors of the volume goes this far. On the contrary, while focusing on phenomena of Chinese kinship that traditionally had been perceived as marginal and describing kinship as fluid and ephemeral, they all try to preserve it as analytical category. This category can to a large extent be described in general terms of relatedness – but not completely. There remains an intractable remnant that somehow seems to transcend it. It is precisely this residue that the authors try to grasp by emphasising the various materialities that shape local conceptions of kinship.

The major issues the book deals with are at the cutting edge of the discipline. This holds true for both Chinese patterns of social life and the conceptualisation of kinship. Both are works in progress and it is yet impossible to predict which direction they will eventually take. Nevertheless, the volume provides readers who have a general interest in China as well as those with a focus on kinship studies with a valuable and stimulating inventory of current practices and cultural articulations.

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(l’anthropologie, la sociologie, la psychologie, la criminologie, le travail social), mais qui forment un réseau de chercheurs/nes, créé en 2005, travaillant sur les « bandes » ou « organisations juvéniles » latino-américaines (certaines s’auto-nommant « nations » d’où le titre du livre).

Après un prologue de Saskia Sassen qui reconnaît l’originalité de la démarche de l’ouvrage, l’introduction de Cerbino et Barrios met l’accent sur ce qui unit les différentes contributions : leurs auteurs pensent qu’un monde différent est possible et que sa transformation peut s’effectuer par un « activisme académique » (dénoncer les inégalités, les injustices) et par l’accompagnement de projets dont l’initiative provient d’organisations de jeunes en situation marginale. Leur objectif est donc de comprendre l’émergence et la reproduction de ces bandes, ainsi que les espaces qu’elles créent pour lutter contre les violences institutionnelles et culturelles/structurelles (liées au néolibéralisme, au racisme, à la criminalisation, à l’« adulto-centrisme »), ce qui implique de défier les discours hégémoniques et moralisateurs sur les jeunes.

Pour leur étude des « organisations de la rue », les auteurs de l’ouvrage s’intéressent à des thématiques comme le transnationalisme, la migration, la marginalisation, les discriminations, la violence, l’impact des médias et l’organisation interne des bandes.

Dans les deux premiers chapitres (Brotherton; Cerbino & Rodríguez), l’aspect transnational des bandes est mis en évidence à travers l’histoire des Latin Kings, organisation de jeunes latino-américains qui émerge à Chicago dans les années 1940, puis qui se diffuse dans d’autres villes des États-Unis à partir des années 1960, en Équateur dès les années 1990, et enfin en Espagne, en Italie, en Belgique et en Allemagne depuis les années 2000. La majorité des articles focalisent leur analyse sur cette bande, en l’anкрant dans son contexte et sa spécificité locale; les États-Unis (Brotherton), l’Équateur (Cerbino & Rodríguez), Madrid (Scandroglion & López), Barcelone (Canelles) et Gênes (Queirolo).

Les discriminations subies par les bandes de jeunes sont examinées à travers deux traits principaux caractérisant leurs membres : le fait d’être jeune et migrant (pour l’Europe et les États-Unis) ou de basse condition socioéconomique (en Équateur et en République Dominicaine). Les médias, par leurs préjugés et leur approche sensationnaliste, ont une grande responsabilité dans cette stigmatisation, qui touche par extension, en situation migratoire, tous les jeunes issus du sous-continent (Cerbino & Rodríguez; Scandroglion & López; Canelles; Queirolo).

La question de la violence est abordée dans toute sa complexité par un certain nombre de chapitres (Brotherton; Cerbino & Rodríguez; Scandroglion & López; Barrios). En effet, ces auteurs prennent en compte les dimensions sociales et historiques du contexte général où évoluent les bandes; ils mettent en perspective les différents types de violence qui se côtoient et se répondent, générant un climat de tension, comme par exemple la violence institutionnelle, la violence « structuro-culturelle », les discriminations multiples, la faim, la diminution des budgets pour l’éducation dans le cas new-yorkais (Barrios).

L’aspect méthodologique prend une place prépondérante dans toutes les contributions à cet ouvrage, comme annoncé dans l’introduction. Les auteurs revendiquent une approche ethnographique, collaborative et engagée vers le changement et l’action (recherche-action). Brotherton développe par exemple le courant de la « criminologie culturelle » qui, contrairement à la criminologie orthodoxe, s’intéresse au monde des personnes qui sont criminalisées en utilisant des méthodes qualitatives et ethnographiques, permettant ainsi de mettre en relief les dimensions émotionnelles des bandes, les résistances face à l’ordre dominant et les savoirs locaux alternatifs. Antonio de Moya, Barrios, Castro, Peña & Jiménez décrivent le projet de prévention du VIH élaboré à Saint-Domingue par des membres de bandes juvéniles et par les auteurs avec le soutien des autorités. Cerbino & Rodríguez

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s’intéressent à l’organisation interne des Latin Kings équatoriens – « nation » dont l’existence est considérée comme le symptôme des limites de l’État face aux jeunes des couches défavorisées – aux valeurs qu’ils développent, au sens qu’ils donnent au monde dans lequel ils vivent, ainsi qu’à leurs idéaux, base sur laquelle s’est développée la collaboration des auteurs dans différents projets, notamment comme médiateurs avec les autorités équatoriennes dans la légalisation de l’organisation en une « corporation ». Canelles aborde l’institutionnalisation de cette bande en Catalogne et Queirolo leur reconnaissance à Gênes, dans les deux cas grâce à l’appui de chercheurs/ses locaux.

L’ouvrage se termine par un essai photographique (Jijon) qui illustre la légalisation de la nation des Latin Kings équatoriens et les projets collaboratifs avec des jeunes en Équateur, aux États-Unis et en République Dominicaine.

Par conséquent, cet ouvrage constitue une approche originale de la thématique des jeunes, par son interdisciplinarité et sa posture de recherche basée sur l’ethnographie. C’est un outil stimulant pour la réflexion sur la « déviance » et sur les questions méthodologiques, notamment celles touchant à l’implication et à l’engagement du chercheur/se, interroessions fondamentales dans toute étude. Il est donc digne d’intérêt non seulement pour toutes les disciplines des sciences sociales, mais aussi pour les pouvoirs publics.

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How do Islamic legal scholars ‘keep up with the times’ and deal with the possibilities and dilemmas of reproductive medicine? In a fascinating and well-written book, Morgan Clarke examines this question in the ethnographic context of Lebanon. Within that country’s frame of legal pluralism as its (post-)colonial legacy, a thriving reproductive medicine sector has emerged. It operates not only under secular forms of civil legislation, but also within Lebanon’s separate religious courts and jurisdictions.

Clark’s insights are based on extensive fieldwork, supplemented by an analysis of Islamic jurisprudential literature and related internet portals, e.g. online fatwa services. He interviewed religious specialists of diverse confessions, but the book focuses on the viewpoints of the most authoritative sheikhs and ayatollahs of Sunni and Shiite traditions.

Organised in three parts, Islam and new kinship creates a fruitful dialogue between anthropological theorising and Islamic moral debates on reproductive medicine. In the first section, Clarke discusses the impact of reproductive technologies upon so-called new kinship studies in anthropology, and then presents characteristics of Lebanese contexts for Islamic reactions to these technologies. Both forms of reasoning are ‘rethinking’ traditional categories of being related, but ‘(w)hile the new kinship studies have turned on the theme of nature versus culture, Islamic debates turn on legitimacy and illegitimacy’ (p. 4).

This is demonstrated by a unique ethnographic study that forms the second part of the book. Here Clarke provides a highly original contribution to the new anthropological kinship studies by shifting the research focus from fertility patients to the sphere of religious Islamic authorities and their lines of argumentation. In general, the various Islamic legal traditions agree to welcome reproductive technologies as a means for countering infertility – as long as they are performed within marriage. When it comes to assisted conception procedures involving a third party (as in sperm donation, egg donation or surrogacy), however, Sunni and Shiite legal opinions diverge. Are these procedures analogous to zina: illicit sexual relations and adultery? Should the resulting
child have *nasab*: legitimate status including inheritance rights? To whom should the child be related: to the gamete donor, to the surrogate, or to the married couple using these substances and procedures? Sunni authorities have decided that such third-party procedures should not be allowed, and if used, resulting children are seen as illegitimate. By contrast, the more pluralist views of Shiite authorities permit egg donation and surrogacy arrangements as long as they are carried out within marriage, and, by consequence, such children are seen as legitimate. A framework of marriage and thus legitimacy can be achieved either by the prospective father marrying both women (egg donor and recipient), polygyny being allowed under Islamic law, or his divorcing and being temporarily married to the egg donor or surrogate, as Shiite law allows unions with a pre-defined duration.

The book's second part continues by presenting the voices of Lebanese medical practitioners in order to examine practical contexts for the striking diversity of Islamic religious responses to fertility treatment. Here, the tension between official religious kinship doctrines and individual practices becomes clear.

In the concluding part of the book, Clarke stresses that although Islamic rulings are to a certain degree surprisingly unrestricted, they cannot be equated with Euro-American concepts of liberalism and biogenetic readings of kinship. When approaching the new kinship options of assisted conception, Islamic religious specialists do not 'rethink' traditional categories and understandings of family and kinship, they rather are 'thinking through them' (p. 192). By its creative reference to classical concepts like *nasab*, *zinā*, adoption, milk kinship, veiling, strategies of 'close' marriage, or marriage prohibitions, Islamic jurisprudence appears to be lively, flexible and highly diverse in its encounters with reproductive medicine.

In Islamic law, kinship notions of propriety override those of substance (egg, sperm, blood), figuring so prominently in Western discourses on the new kinship. Ultimately, one's legitimate status in Islamic law is dependent on being conceived and born within wedlock. By consequence, not all biogenetically related children are legitimate. Clarke argues that legitimacy has faded from relevance in Western kinship discourses (and assumes that exactly this might explain the significance of biogenetic relations), whereas Islamic debates in the Middle East are focused on propriety, sexual morality and thus, on legitimacy.

By thinking through anthropological and Islamic debates of assisted conception in a Middle Eastern setting, *Islam and new kinship* is highly valuable for students and scholars interested in medical anthropology, kinship studies, Middle Eastern studies, as well as science and technology studies.

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Flicking through Timothy Daniels’ book, the cursory reader might wonder how a sex symbol and pop star like Dangdut performer Inul Daratista fits into Java’s Islamic spectrum. However, on closer inspection, this rich ethnography exploring the 'incredible opening of spaces for the expression and performance of ideas and feelings' (p. 15) in post-Suharto Indonesia shows how this controversial dance phenomenon was apparently significant enough for no one less than former president Abdurrahman Wahid to coin his defence of Inul's freedom of expression in terms of safeguarding her human rights.

Drawing on detailed empirical research, this study of cultural politics in the world’s largest Muslim country at the beginning of the 21st century is theoretically located halfway between the works of Clifford Geertz and Mark Woodward, extending the

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debate on how to characterise the country’s religious landscape, which has preoccupied Indonesianists since the publication of Geertz’s seminal *The religion of Java* almost half a century ago.

Daniels explains how his examination draws on John Bowen’s anthropological definition of religion. Author of a number of studies of the Gayo-speaking societies of northern Sumatra and a textbook on the anthropology of religion, Bowen sees religion as the ideas and practices through which people construct their world, postulating a reality beyond the immediately perceptible. Such a definition can accommodate practices, rituals and beliefs that others might regard as belonging to the cultural or artistic domain rather than the religious in a narrower sense. Thus:

[t]his culturally relative, contextual, and multidimensional conception of ‘religion’ can be used as a refined descriptive and analytical tool to explicate local religious views and the ways they contribute to framing projections of desirable futures. Indonesian Muslims, like believers of other religions in other places and times, fashion religious realms in particular historical contexts and put them to various uses from personal piety to ideological and political contestations. (p. 5)

Daniels also accounts for his personal positioning in his research environment. As a cultural relativist, he challenges the ethnocentric standards by which American scholarship tends to assess Indonesian politics and socio-cultural dynamics, while as an ‘involved researcher’ of African-American descent and practising Muslim married to a Javanese he must navigate the complexities of social identity relationships of kinship, affinity, locality, race, nationality and religion’ (p. 11).

Drawing on his fieldwork in one of the two remaining Javanese sultanates, Yogyakarta, the first chapter describes what Geertz’s ‘Theatre State’ looks like in the early 21st century. As an enduring locale of tradition and culture subject to the commodification of the associated ceremonies, celebrations and material culture by both local and national government administrations, Daniels shows how the legacy of the historical fusions of the palace, local myths, Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic elements into cosmologies and methods of ritual communication are now reinterpreted and reinvented in terms of agama (religion), kepercayaan (customary, non-religious beliefs) and budaya (culture).

Reflecting on some key moments in the colonial and post-war debates on how to locate Javanese Islam between ‘thin veneer’ and ‘normative piety’, Daniels uses this multiplicity of interpretations to articulate his own contributions to the ethnography of religious experience in Java. Whereas the representations of administrators, scholars and visitors of the colonial era were given a new twist by Clifford Geertz’s transformation of three local cultural categories into the now famous or infamous ‘ur-typology’ of abangan, priyayi and santri, a younger generation of researchers, including Bowen, Hefner and Woodward, advocates a ‘broader view of Islamic variants’ (p. 35). Suggesting that ‘while Geertz underplayed Sufi mysticism and overplayed the continuation of Hindu-Buddhist and animist streams, Woodward tends to overplay Sufi mysticism and underestimates continuities of Hindu-Buddhist and animist elements’, Daniels wants to provides a ‘more extensive ethnographic base from which to discuss the range of Javanese Islam’ (pp. 39–40).

That spectrum is illustrated in the remaining five chapters, rendering lively and engaging portrayals of practices and expressions reflective of religious experiences in often intersecting cultural and social milieus. As examples of the varying orientations towards a shared belief in an unseen world of supernatural entities, Daniels introduces different types of Muslim faith healers – referred to as dukun, kyai and ustaz – ranging from somewhat sinister practitioners of the dark arts to fully accredited physicians. Through an adaptation of Victor Turner’s concept of ‘social drama’,...
Daniels also examines how a form of communitas is forged out of the social contradictions and ongoing conflict underlying the ‘strong opposition between institutionalized Islamic and anti-structural populist visions for Indonesian society’ (p. 81). Here he uses a syncretic genre of Indonesian pop music known as dangdut and the accompanying but highly controversial dance style called goyang to illustrate the complexity and depth of the cultural ideas underlying these opposing perspectives.

The contested place of the arts in relation to religious beliefs and practices is explored further by comparing the positions held by ‘shariah-minded’ Muslim modernists. These range from the rejection of most localised cultural practices as prone to syirik (idolatry) or bid’a (unlawful innovation) to more moderate and liberal interpretations which see no harm in expressions of human creativity as long as they do not run counter to the Islamic tenets, or which regard them as worldly cultural events altogether outside the religious realm. Others again exploit the arts for ‘cultural dakwah’ or Islamic propagation. The book’s two final substantive chapters are dedicated to Yogyakarta’s lively student theatre scene and a case study of the Maiyah movement, founded by the poet-musician Emha Ainul Nadjib (aka Cak Nun) and his group Kiai Kanjeng. These provide a detailed survey of an avant-garde cultural scene as a site of political critique and contestation, activism and social transformation, while a close reading of Cak Nun’s texts and the stratagems of Kiai Kanjeng’s performances at Maiyah events affirm the rich textures and layers of meaning across the Islamic perspective in Java.

Holding the middle between ‘hard’ descriptive and interpretative ethnography and cultural studies, this book will appeal to students and scholars across the social sciences and humanities with an interest in Southeast Asia.

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This volume focuses on a special type of ordeal by fire called bisha’h, in which a person is made to lick a heated piece of metal (usually a ladle) to prove his innocence. Based on extensive ethnographic field research, Joseph Ginat has written a tremendously stimulating and detailed monograph in the field of folk religion and customary law in present-day Egypt.

Bisha’h is a peculiar ceremony that is conducted in order to ascertain the truth. When somebody suspects another person of theft, property damage, manslaughter, murder, illicit sexual relations, rape, or sorcery, the suspect and the accuser have the possibility to visit the mubasha’, a respected ‘middle man’ who conducts the ordeal by fire. Everyone has to bring at least one witness. The mubasha’ usually opens by asking, ‘Have you come to bisha’h?’ and the answer will always be ‘Insha Allah’. Further on the mubasha’ asks, ‘Who is making the claim?’ The accusation then describes the event and the case will be written down at the registration book. Both, the accuser and the suspect have to declare that they will accept the outcome of the ritual. Then a ladle will be heated over the fire up to 600–900 degree Celsius. The suspect has to lick the ladle three times. After five minutes the mubasha’ and the witnesses will check his tongue: If the suspect’s tongue blisters, he is deemed to be guilty. If his tongue is clear, he is declared innocent.

The monograph has a clear disposition and an excellent arrangement of the chapters. In the beginning Joseph Ginat gives a review of his first encounters with bisha’h ceremonies. This is followed by a comprehensive introduction chapter. The core of this exciting book is the detailed description of 35 case studies that give an impressive perception how bisha’h works and in which socio-cultural framework it is embedded. Ginat describes the historical
origins of such trials by ordeal as well as the kinship relations of the mubasha’ and his clients. However, from a structural point of view the relation of bisha’b with local conceptions of baraka and other religious ties could have been more emphasised. In this context Ginat quotes the classical studies by Edvard Westermarck and Ernest Gellner, although the concept of ‘living saints’ in Morocco might be somewhat different from the recent role of the mubasha’ in Egypt and Palestine. Concerning the emic conceptions of baraka and conflict resolution, it is remarkable that taking an oath at a local sanctuary has a higher significance than visiting the mubasha’ (pp. 14, 20).

Ginat postulates that the people who attend bisha’b ceremonies are completely convinced by the causal relation between the guiltiness of a person and the state of his or her tongue after licking the ladle. He refers to Milton Rokeach and argues that the strong belief in the method is one of the explanations for the successful operation of bisha’b (p. 36). In this context the idea of appointing a proxy is highly interesting: If the suspect is not able to undergo the bisha’b by himself, any person who is convinced by his innocence can lick the ladle in his place (p. 131).

At present, bisha’b ceremonies are only conducted in Egypt, where Ginat recognises a kind of revitalisation. According to Ginat, bisha’b was previously performed in Palestine, in Saudi Arabia (until the late 1980s), in Jordan (King Hussein banned the ordeal by fire in 1976), and probably in Iraq. My own field research in contemporary Syria in 2003 confirms that bisha’b was practised quite recently in the Northeastern parts of Syria, too. There was a very famous sheikb in Ra’s al-Ayn, who worked as a local specialist for extrajudicial arbitration. He used different tools in order to ascertain the guiltiness or innocence of the suspect. Along with collective interviews, individual examinations, confirmation under oath, and a special treatment with a snake, he uses also the instrument of licking a heated ladle. However, until today there are still discussions in Ra’s al-Ayn about the question of whether the sheikb was occasionally manipulating the outcome by heating the ladle in different ways.

Ginat describes a peaceful co-existence between the protagonists of bisha’b (customary law), the ulema (Islamic law) and the police (state law). In his book he doesn’t mention any interview partner who is not convinced by the correctness of bisha’b ceremonies. He asserts that the number of bisha’b cases is growing and nowadays even students from Cairo are among the clients of the mubasha’. Ordeals by fire will remain a highly exciting topic in present-day Egypt as well as in social anthropology. In further investigations it may well be fruitful to focus on epistemological questions that are connected with legal pluralism and the revitalisation of bisha’b.

GEBHARD FARTACEK
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Felicia Hughes-Freeland became interested in traditional Indonesian dancing when she was teaching English with Voluntary Service Overseas in Java in the late 1970s. During her stay she learned Balinese dancing and later on she was able to turn the pursuit of her hobby into an academic career focusing on dance traditions of the Sultan’s court at Yogyakarta, including periods of anthropological field work between 1982 and 1999. In colonial times the principalities of Yogyakarta and Surakarta, remnants of a much larger Javanese realm that was broken up in the 18th century by the Dutch and reduced considerably in size in the 19th century, enjoyed a special status. The rulers were allowed to maintain their palaces with their numerous retainers and their splendid annual rounds of
celebrations, as well as special festivities such as weddings and enthronements. This did not mean that these principalities remained untouched by modern influences, such as the introduction of cash-crop plantations and agricultural wage labour; on the contrary, the demands of keeping up a royal lifestyle made it necessary to make money from contracts with foreign entrepreneurs. After independence in 1949 a new constitution abolished this semi-sovereignty, although the Sultan of Yogyakarta continued to play a formal political role in recognition of his support for the Indonesian republic when the Dutch tried to reassert themselves after the Japanese occupation had ended.

An important part of Hughes-Freeland’s research at Yogyakarta was intensive training to learn the demanding physical skills and the intricate spatial movements of court dances. This apprenticeship provided the basis for understanding the aesthetics of dance movements and the way Javanese relate this form of dance to their ideas of visible and invisible processes that constitute personhood and proper social behaviour. Since the 1920s this type of dance is no longer exclusively learned and practised in court settings and performers value it not only as a form of art but also for its ‘spiritual’ effects. However, the author emphasises and explains how Javanese attach different meanings to the terms and categories I use here unreflectively and also often disagree among themselves in their interpretations. This is partly due to the differences in time depth of their life experiences. Authoritative views were voiced by people who grew up during the late colonial period when patronage was wholly court based, in contrast to the last quarter of the 20th century when performances for tourists had also become important.

Apart from relating dance to everyday life of individuals, the author also considers Yogya court dancing as a symbol used in the invention and maintenance of social identities at various levels of inclusion. Court dancing at Yogya not only differs from other Javanese dance traditions associated with village settings or from Balinese dancing, but also from court dancing at Surakarta. Moreover, forms and functions changed considerably during the course of history and can be traced through documentary records and orally transmitted recollections. If one also takes into account that Indonesian identity politics have been the subject of serious scholarly debates, it is clear that the successful integration of these various components should be considered a major accomplishment of this study.

The book is carefully constructed. At the end of each chapter the reader is left with enough questions to want to go on reading the next one. Descriptive passages evoking the immediate experience of this kind of dancing for performers and spectators punctuate an interpretive analysis that is grounded in carefully considered arguments that serve a better understanding of the subject, rather than trying to persuade the reader that the author’s theoretical position is to be preferred to those of others.

Although the extended bibliography is an excellent guide to the existing literature, there are still topics on which more information would have been useful. For instance, it remains difficult to assess the impact of changes in the internal organisation of the court and, most importantly in view of the role of the Sultan’s patronage, its shifting economic basis. However, such – perhaps unanswerable – questions in no way diminish my appreciation of what we can learn from this book. This may well be due to its robust empiricism, justified by an appeal to de Certeau’s agentive tactics, but significantly rejecting his Foucaultian view in which the Javanese body would become a text, unable to resist the discursive determinism of the Indonesian state. Is this perhaps the intellectual debt the author mentions to owe to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of SOAS, London University?

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This fascinating collection, edited by Aberdeen-based anthropologists Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst, unveils the tacit nature of walking and will likely make most readers take a different stroll through their own ethnographic data. The volume convincingly demonstrates that walking is not merely another field of enquiry, but an integral, and often forgotten, aspect of social life per se. The editors argue that ethnographic analysis of walking can help us ‘rethink what being social actually means’ (p. 2), opting for a phenomenological analysis on the move. The collection does not fall prey to the danger of half-cooked workshop proceedings, nor does it get monotonous in its treatment of the subject matter. Including both anthropologists and authors with other backgrounds, the analyses overall show both intellectual curiosity and originality. Often exploring and certainly expanding the empirical variety of paths opened up by Ingold’s previous work, the chapters combine an inspiring blend of new walking gazes, conceptual meditations and meticulous descriptions of movement, slips and turns. Kenneth Olwig, for example, stresses the fundamental difference between performing upon, or, doing landscapes involving different ways of seeing and belonging. Approaching such cultural realities necessitates ethnography on foot, as the authors point out. Jo Lee Vergunst focuses on everyday textures, sensations and emotions of walking and losing ones way in the Scottish highlands, while Tim Edensor takes us through the cracks of ruins to question the regulated fabric of urban space. The cultural realm of walking is different in Lye Tuck-Po’s exploration of walking practices and emotions among the Batek in Borneo using careful observation and phenomenological detail. Another is Allice Legat’s chapter on walking as experience linking narrative to personal learning among Dene in northwestern Canada paralleled by Elizabeth Curtis’ learning trails used by primary schoolchildren in Aberdeen and Katrin Lund’s emphasis on Andalusian processions as story-telling. Many show how walking is inseparable from, indeed constitutive of, particular ways of looking, learning and knowing environments. The juxtaposition of cases is intriguing. Thomas Widlock compares Akhoe Hai//om people with ‘conflueners’, seeking to reach points where lines of latitude and longitude intersect just as we meet the Munros collecting mountaintops in Haydem Lorimer and Katrin Lund’s description from the Scottish highlands. Contributions about how pastoral and hunter-gatherer ways of walking are intimately tied to the feet of the animals they follow are also thought provoking. While predominantly phenomenological in their approaches, some of the chapters reveal how the micro-logics of walking do not exclude situating practice and observation in broader contexts. Whether in terms of Sonia Lavadinho and Yves Winkin’s pedestrian politics and empowerment in Geneva or landscape politics, walking also appears here and there in the texts as a field of ideology, framing and regulation. Pernille Gooch nicely combines tight ethnography of Van Gujjar pastoralist experience of transhumance with punctual descriptions of encroachment, barriers and sedentarist politics as they move through the landscape. As the editors emphasise in their introduction, politics of walking include marching soldiers, roads of colonisation and paths of habitation. Yet, the overall emphasis of the volume is on walking as distinctive ways of experiencing rather than broader contexts and politics.

Particularly salient and evocative, in this respect, is the use of ethnographic material to ground the anthropological, even philosophical, questions and hypotheses posed. Does it help us rethink what being social means? It certainly adds motion, depth and detail suggesting alternative descriptions of sociality far more connected to grounded movement. While this in some descriptions tends towards very individual experiences, others situate experience socially with
surrounding animals, ancestors, neighbours and planners. Many of the chapters not only talk, but seek to walk the reader through new ways of approaching the field, conceptualising knowledge and doing ethnography. In the spirit of walking, they open up new anthropological paths of exploration.

PETER BILLE LARSEN
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In Hadrami Arabs in present-day Indonesia, Frode Jacobsen presents the results of his fieldwork in Indonesia conducted in the years 1999–2001 on the islands of Bali, Lombok and Sumbawa, as well as in the Javanese city of Surabaya. His field research coincided with a period of political and economic insecurity immediately after the fall of Indonesia’s long-time president Suharto in May 1998. Meanwhile, the transforming years after Suharto have been analysed in a number of publications, but there had not been any comprehensive account of how Indonesian Hadramis, one of the country’s influential entrepreneurial minorities, experienced that transition. In this regard, Jacobsen’s study should interest a readership larger than the scholarly community usually concerned with the Hadrami diaspora. Moreover, the book’s focus on the contemporary represents in itself a rarity, since most of the scholarly literature about the Hadrami diaspora is historically oriented, dealing with colonial times when migration from the Hadramawt, a region located in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, to the islands that later became Indonesia reached its peak. Jacobsen’s study offers a further perspective that will enrich the literature: it explores the lives of Hadramis positioned at the middle and lower levels of a ranking system that characterises Hadrami society. This offers insights complementary to the most stimulating studies of the Hadrami diaspora that have been published during the last decade, which almost exclusively focus on the elite stratum, the so-called sada (a collective designation for descendants of the prophet Mohammed).

After discussing the historical background and presenting some introductory ethnographic material, Jacobsen introduces one of the main findings of his book, which is also contained in its subtitle depicting Hadramis as ‘an Indonesia-oriented group with an Arab signature’ – a phrase he borrowed from Dutch anthropologist Huub de Jonge, one of the leading researchers on the Hadrami diaspora. Jacobsen argues that in present-day Indonesia, after the passing away of almost all first-generation immigrants, Hadramis have integrated well into Indonesian society, but have at the same time retained certain traits that distinguish them from other Indonesian Muslims, such as keeping their clan names, emphasising endogamy and genealogy, attaching greater importance to Islamic education, being active in Hadrami-founded Islamic organisations and maintaining ties with kinsmen in the Middle East. He illustrates this with surveys he conducted in Bali, Lombok and Sumbawa.

Concerning their economic situation, Jacobsen reports that Hadramis are still primarily engaged in trade, textiles being the most important goods along with furniture, wood and charcoal. However, wealth is unevenly distributed, as Hadramis in Bali are generally better off than their counterparts in Lombok and even more so than those in Sumbawa where Hadramis, not least because of the ‘Asian crisis’ that had hit Indonesia so badly, send their young women as maids and babysitters to Middle Eastern countries. This is very unusual for Hadramis in Indonesia, where normally only ‘indigenous’ (pribumi) women go abroad and become maids. Yet also Hadramis residing on other islands suffered from the crisis when travelling, outside as well as inside Indonesia, became more expensive,
particularly afflicting Hadramis’ diasporic networking.

Another interesting finding of Jacobsen’s study concerns the internal differentiation of the Hadrami community. Whereas the clear-cut lines between the sada and Hadramis of other social categories seem to persist, among the latter group the term mashayikh became a ‘lump category’ under which most non-sada Hadramis are subsumed today. This differs considerably from the Hadramawt, where the mashayikh are generally considered as the second-highest stratum, above several others such as the masakin (servants, peasants) or the ‘abid (descendants of slaves). As Jacobsen’s research suggests, more than 50 years into Indonesia’s independence, after which migration to the country drastically decreased, this internal differentiation has waned considerably in diasporic Hadrami society.

In the last chapter of his book, Jacobsen, who is also a trained medical anthropologist, gives an account of a Hadrami healing group in Bali that offers its services of alternative medical treatment not only to Muslims but also to Balinese Hindus and tourists from abroad. The group is led by a charismatic leader who employs concepts of Javanese and sufi mysticism and, to a lesser extent, even connects to Hinduism. Remarkably, this does not prevent the healer from adhering to a modernist version of Islam that stresses the purity of the religion. By way of comparison with previous research he had conducted in Northern Sudan, Jacobsen examines concepts of charisma deployed by the Hadrami healing group in Bali. In this context, he discusses in more detail how the leader of the group channelled his charisma during the critical phase of post-Suharto-Indonesia, when Christian and Muslim groups clashed violently in some parts of Eastern Indonesia and inter-religious relations generally became more tense.

Jacobsen’s book offers new insights into today’s Hadrami communities by focusing on a part of the vast archipelago that has so far hardly attracted the attention of scholars interested in Indonesia’s Arab minority. These insights relating to the internal differentiation of the diaspora, female labour migration to the Middle East, the employment of charisma by a Hadrami leader in a religiously diverse context etc. make the book a must-read for the scholarly community concerned with the Hadrami diaspora. Hopefully, Routledge will publish a paperback version soon, since the hardback issues of its Contemporary Southeast Asia Series, of which this book is a part, are particularly high-priced and will probably deter a wider readership from consulting the book.

MARTIN SLAMA
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For those interested in the social life of the Bible and other written materials, this book is sure to surprise. It engages with other anthropological studies of literacy practices among African-initiated Christian churches. Thomas Kirsch’s thick description of reading and writing among Zambian Pentecostal-charismatic church leaders and laity shears away what the author considers the ‘exceptionalism’ often ascribed to these organisations based on a scholarly fascination with speaking in tongues, exorcism and healing. The author moves beyond this exceptionalism through challenging the scholarly boundaries drawn around forms of authority typified as ‘charismatic’ and spiritually evanescent on the one hand and ‘institutional’ and bureaucratic on the other. For readers, the result is that Kirsch manages to unravel deeply entrenched assumptions about ‘religions of the book’ that oppose and separate matters of the ‘Spirit’ from the ‘Letter.’

The organisation of the book into four main parts, ‘Histories and Ethnographies’,
‘Literate Religion’, ‘Ways of Reading’, and ‘Bureaucracy in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Mode’, reflects as much current publishing standards as it does the framework of the author’s study. While the ethnography presented is intriguing in its detail and breadth, many of the seventeen individual chapters through which the ethnography develops are quite brief, giving the overall presentation of the author’s ideas an overly wrought quality that demands the best of the reader’s attention.

‘Histories and Ethnographies’ provides background to the history of educational and administrative literacies in colonial Southern Africa. Of value here are fascinating discussions about the conflicts between the Northern Rhodesian administration and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the latter organisation implicated in the commission of enquiry into the 1935 Copperbelt Disturbances. Examining the history of literacy more generally, this part of the book includes refreshing analyses of how ‘school’ and ‘church’ were configured within a broader context of anti-colonial struggle, a significant aspect of the earlier history of indigenous Christian movements.

‘Literate Religion’ provides minute details on the materiality of written materials and the sociality of reading practices in the area of the author’s research. Here, Kirsch presents readers with the social lives of reading materials and provides some very interesting insights into the materiality of Bibles in particular, but also of the effects of paper shortages and the evaluations of different kinds of religious written material according to local notions of spiritual authenticity. Of wide-ranging interests, the author also examines the controversial uses of the Bible on what he calls the ‘fringes of Christianity’, especially among healers. Kirsch is very careful throughout this section to demonstrate the coalescence of speech and reading practices to maintain consistency with his later ideas about the inappropriateness of opposing ‘orality’ with ‘literacy’ in his research context.

‘Ways of Reading’ is perhaps the most interesting part by providing one of the best ethnographically grounded explanations of what the Holy Spirit can mean to Pentecostal-charismatic Christians. Key to Kirsch’s interlocuters is the idea that not all Christian publications are endowed with spirituality of a divine origin. From vernacular Bibles to Watchtower pamphlets, religious publications are only deemed to be religiously significant if their reader or writer was considered a spiritually endowed person and they are assisted through the power and authority of the Holy Spirit as an evanescent spiritual force. Reading the Bible itself, as a material object, is not sufficient for spiritual understanding. For this to occur there is a need for scriptural mediation of a spiritual and divine kind.

‘Bureaucracy in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Mode’ is the crux of Kirsch’s argument and yet much of it relies, in smallest detail, upon the previous parts. By focusing on low-in-rank church secretaries of the Spirit Apostolic Church, to draw on one given example, this part looks at how the conducting of bureaucratic work, especially the documentation of the activities of spiritually endowed church leaders, could bring such aspiring persons closer to God. By ‘bureaucracy in the Pentecostal-charismatic mode’, Kirsch aims to describe to his readers how secretarial work was associated with questions of spiritual power, and hence reveals much about the nature of authority in the churches he studied. In conclusion, Kirsch argues that internal criticism frequently led to a re-spiritualisation of bureaucratic practices, a process producing a kind of ‘façade’ through which church adherents and their leadership could either conceal or render visible various aspects of their organisations. In a part of rural Zambia where the state was considered to be oppressive, this bureaucratic façade allowed a ‘self-protective compatibility’ with state agencies, while also enabling Pentecostal-charismatic practices internally rather than constraining them.

The surprise value of Kirsch’s work lies in the broad sweep from fine-grained

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descriptions of individuals’ Bibles to far-reaching theoretical critiques of the anthropology of literary practices and bureaucracy. If any quibble should be made with this book, it lies with the demands of new publishing standards, resulting in highly condensed ethnographies, such as this one, which might benefit from being a hundred or so pages longer, giving the reader and the writer room to breathe. With this reader, the Holy Spirit has failed to come to his assistance.

MARK LAMONT
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A fascinating read for legal anthropologists or anybody interested in law in Ethiopia, this volume sheds as much light on contemporary Ethiopian legal studies as on current Ethiopian legal practice. This read, though, is slowed by inattentive copy-editing, as words are spelled differently in different chapters, and many phrasings are awkward or confusing.

The structure of the book is cleverly conceived. As it proceeds through four sections, the editors manage to build up a momentum of suspense, not resolved until the very last page: their long introduction sets the stage and gives an overview over what is to come, the supplementary survey by Dominik Kohlhagen presents comparative material from elsewhere in Africa, and then, on 160 pages, we find eleven case reports on various administrative parts of Ethiopia, each outlining and opining on the state of Customary Dispute Resolution (CDR) in the respective region. Finally, the editors sum up these findings in the last chapter. What is suspenseful about this?

In their preface and introduction, Pankhurst and Getachew set out a clear aim for the volume: as they state, CDR is ‘vibrant and prevalent throughout the country’ (p. v), but neither legally sanctioned nor integrated into the state-sponsored institutions, which is deemed problematic and requiring intervention. By assembling crucial information on CDR throughout the country, and making measured recommendations on how to deal with these practices, they want to contribute to the process of reforming the Ethiopian justice system, which is occurring now within much wider processes of decentralisation. Thus, their endeavour indeed aims high, and is appropriately supported by the French embassy (with égalité, liberté and fraternité prominent on the back cover), while the research itself took place under the auspices of the Ethiopian Ministry of Justice. The basic assumption underlying all the authors’ efforts, then, is that ‘CDR systems can contribute through partnership and collaboration with the formal system to providing culturally acceptable and meaningful justice’ (p. 8).

That this charter is an old and wide-spread one, with its own woeful history of failures and shady compromises, is subsequently developed by Kohlhagen. On fourteen pages, he does a good job of outlining (supported by much comparative material) the well-known problems with attempts to reconcile ‘local level systems’ with official courts. Typically, clashes occur from the demands of codification, formalisation, equality before the law and surrendering cultural values: according to him, ‘[i]t is not only the implementation but also the whole logics of state law which opposes the needs and expectations of people who have been socialized in very different contexts’ (p. 78). Attempts to co-opt CDR practices usually end up changing them beyond recognition. Wisely, the author projects the limits of reform of CDR to coincide with the limits of state law itself.

Kohlhagen’s contribution marks a dramatic counterpoint to the introduction by the editors. After reading his useful remarks,
one wonders how this will end. With this record of failure, what is the editors’ secret that will allow them to make a reasonable case for integrating ‘grass-roots justice’ into state law, attempts at which failed elsewhere? How can Pankhurst, an anthropologist, and Getachew, a scholar of law, maintain their case that what they strive for with this volume is at all feasible?

Following on Kohlhagen are eleven case studies, each undertaken by a team of junior researchers, both from law and anthropology, who with varying degrees of eloquence and subtlety characterise some CDR practices from Tigray to Sidama, and from Gambella to Harar. The generalising profiles of CDR in the various regions as well as the individual case studies some of these condensed reports contain are roundabout insightful. Can they, though, answer the critical question raised above? While none of these chapters strays into theorising (excepting the solicited section on Gambella supplied by Dereje Feyissa), they do go beyond mere empiricism by including some ‘Conclusions and recommendations’. Nearly all of them acknowledge that there are de facto collaborations between appointed officials and CDR practitioners, and clearly highlight that CDR is faster, cheaper, more trusted, more accessible and less corrupt than the formal justice system, while the treatment of women, children and minorities and the lax stance towards basic human rights remain grounds for concern. Still, not sensitive to the issues raised by Kohlhagen or contemporary social science, some contributors succumb to simplistic normative claims-making, of which the following bizarre case is but one example: ‘The formal justice system is founded on logic, reason and principles. Wuqabi [lit. ‘spirit’, F.G.] dispute resolution is based on the spirit world. As such, the decisions taken are not rationally based. Consequently it is difficult to see how the two systems could be integrated’ (p. 119). It is in turn difficult to see how such a statement can be integrated with the first two parts of the volume, so it is with curiosity that one turns to the editors’ last words, which are rather sensible.

Pankhurst and Getachew reaffirm that CDR is ‘widely distributed and prevalent throughout Ethiopia’ (p. 257), usually tolerated or even embraced by local officials even where their practice is not legally recognised, or where they overstep their constitutional applicability to civil law by dealing with criminal cases. The editors go on to succinctly list ten ‘major characteristics’ of CDR, ten ‘advantages’ (as those mentioned above) as well as five ‘limitations’ (such as ‘inequitability’ and ‘lack of uniformity’ throughout the country), all of which are quite plausible. They also show their awareness of the troubled history of attempts to co-opt customary law (expert knowledge seemingly withheld from the junior researchers who wrote the regional reports), and finally suggest ten informed and non-coercive measures for ‘enhancing partnership and collaboration’ (p. 268). Thus, calmly and confidently, the initial claim that it is possible and feasible for the state to integrate CDR is maintained. That CDR institutions gain less from such collaboration than the official judiciary is demonstrated as well.

This surprising volume thus carries in itself the seed of contradiction, as it not only has potential use for policy-makers and administrators aiming to consolidate the state’s influence on local practices, but could equally serve as a primer for more subversive inquiries or interventions.

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The present volume, resulting from a meeting at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle/Saale (Germany),
presents contributions of fifteen scholars, in an unprecedented attempt to present a new perspective on one of anthropology’s classical (and in many ways ‘traditional’) topics. Religion has occupied a special place in the imagination of early anthropologists, at least from Tylor’s *Primitive culture* in 1871, and it remained one of the most important topic of research ever since.

In its thirteen chapters, divided through five parts, the contributors of this book present the case for the importance of religion in the contemporary world and in current anthropological research. In doing so, they introduce both historical overviews (João Vasconcelos on the late 19th-century anthropology of religion; Simon Coleman on Christianity, ethnographic taboos and the meanings of ‘science’), and a variety of case studies. The latter cover a wide geographic range, from southern Zambia (Thomas Kirsch writing on ‘African spirituality and transportation’), urban India (Ursula Rao on temple-building and re-creation of religious boundaries), Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Cornelia Sorabji on concepts of tolerance and neighbourhood), Laos (Grant Evans on Buddhist royal family commemorative rituals), and southern Fujian in China (Stefan Feuchtwang writing on pomp, extravagance and organisation of self-government). There are also chapters dealing with interactions between shamanism and Buddhism in southern Siberia (by Galina Lindquist) and on celibate marriages among the Brahma Kumaris in Poland (by Agnieszka Kościańska). The book concludes with three chapters on the relationship between modernity and the transmission of religion – on the dynamics of religious transmission among the Baga of Guinea (by Ramon Sarró), geomancy and colonial encounters in rural Hong Kong (by Rubie S. Watson and James L. Watson), and aspects of modernity in a Soviet-built town in Central India (by Jonathan P. Parry).

In their Introduction, the editors of this volume, Frances Pine and João de Pina-Cabral, introduce some basic concepts and general methodological principles. First of all, they emphasise the fact that the very concept of ‘religion’ is very difficult to define, as it covers a wide range of beliefs and practices. By consciously avoiding any attempt to define it, even in the most general terms, Pine and Pina-Cabral argue for the varieties and multiplicities of religious experiences that should be observed and interpreted in concrete ethnographic situations. Another key concept that they introduce for the essays in this book is the concept of *margins*. As put by the editors: ‘Primarily, there is the distinction between being “a margin” of something or “on a margin” between things. (…) Then, religion can either be treated as the object of consideration – the “thing” – or it may be treated adjectivally – a quality of the “thing”. (…) And, finally, there is the matter of temporality or, better still, process. If marginality/centrality is a structural notion, it is necessarily in flux’ (p. 5). All of this accounts for the setting where ‘rather than engaging directly with the institutions of mainstream religions or the grand theories concerning magic, science or religion, the authors of this book focused on the politics of religion, on epistemologies and paradigms of spirituality and science, and on those areas of silence, ambiguity and forgetting, where religion and belief are hidden, subdued or suppressed’ (p. 7). The result, with an overarching focus on ‘modernity and its ambivalences’ (p. 8), is a well-written and insightful volume, which presents new and exciting ways of dealing with one of anthropology’s more ancient (but still essential) research topics.

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L’ouvrage a pour objectif principal de montrer comment se nouent dans les zones
rurales de l’Uttar Pradesh, accès à la maternité, mortalité infantile, politiques d’intervention de l’Etat et des ONG, citoyenneté et subjectivités politiques. En effet, dans le district du Nord de l’Inde où Sarah Pinto a mené ses enquêtes, l’histoire a fait des corps des femmes des enjeux de politiques nationales et transnationales. Là, le monde rural charrie tout un imaginaire, en particulier comme lieu de l’arriération et de la tradition. Or, cet imaginaire a joué un rôle significatif dans le façonnage des politiques de l’Etat, et des acteurs du « développement » en général, dans ces lieux. Les femmes rurales vivent ainsi dans une société conçue par les acteurs étatiques ou non gouvernementaux du « développement » comme devant être mise sur la voie du progrès. Et une telle situation s’applique particulièrement aux femmes intouchables (dalit) sur lesquelles est focalisée la recherche, étant donnée la place centrale qu’elles occupent traditionnellement dans les soins donnés aux femmes dans la période qui suit l’accouchement. Car si des femmes de toutes castes sont susceptibles d’aider une femme à accoucher, la coupe du cordon, le traitement du placenta et les soins de la période postpartum sont eux, en principe, « castés », et reviennent à des femmes de statut social et de caste inférieurs, les dasi. Les idéologies de caste, toutefois, sont mobilisées de façon parfois contextuelle, et certainement pas avec une rigidité systématique. En outre, selon que les accouchements se passent à la maison ou à l’hôpital, les traitements du placenta et le rôle éventuellement joué par les dasi varie (pp. 103–104).

Dans les différents chapitres, Sarah Pinto, après avoir tracé les contours de la place qu’occupent les femmes intouchables dans les soins de la période postpartum (chapitre 1), montre la façon dont est localement conçu le placenta (chapitre 2). Le traitement de celui-ci s’avère en effet assez révélateur d’hierarchies et de dynamiques sociales plus larges. Poursuivant sa cartographie des configurations sociales dans lesquelles s’inscrivent les femmes enceintes et les jeunes mères, elle met en évidence la position cruciale qu’occupent dans cette arène des soignants informels (chapitre 3). Sarah Pinto fait ensuite porter son analyse sur le « regard clinique » tel qu’il conçoit les femmes enceintes, et sur la façon dont celui-ci contribue au façonnage de l’expérience de la grossesse (chapitre 4). Le cinquième chapitre traite ensuite de la question des décès d’enfants et du deuil psychique, saisi ici à partir de récits de mères ayant perdu un bébé. Un sixième chapitre est ensuite consacré à la façon dont la « figure mythique » (p. 27) de la sage-femme « traditionnelle » (dai) informe les politiques d’intervention menées par l’Etat et les ONG. Enfin, un septième et dernier chapitre porte sur les catégories morales charriées par les politiques d’intervention et sur la façon dont celles-ci redéfinissent les contours d’une nouvelle condition intouchable.

Au fil des chapitres émerge une description fine et profonde des impacts que l’idéologie du progrès social et de l’arriération du monde rural ont sur la vie des femmes vivant dans les campagnes. Ce monde rural en effet fait l’objet d’une stigmatisation assez importante par les institutions porteuses de politiques d’intervention, et la place des dasi dans la société est dès lors vivement débattue : les tenants du « progrès social » s’élevant vivement contre cette institution qui freine selon eux la pénétration de la biomédecine. La configuration sociale dont Sarah Pinto explore les différentes facettes dans son ouvrage est donc incontestablement complexe. On regrettera toutefois que cette complexité soit ici rendue au moyen d’une écriture parfois trop touffue, que d’autres collègues anglophones désignent quelque peu féroce comme « badly translated French ». Au final, Sarah Pinto nous livre un ouvrage intéressant et documenté, mais qu’un style maniére rend inhabituellement difficile à lire.

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This very well-written volume by David Price is one of the best and most important analyses of the relations between anthropology and wider public issues that I have read during the past decade. It offers a meticulous study of the role of American anthropology and anthropologists in the Second World War. It also offers comparative insights by introducing the role of their colleagues in other countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany or Japan. Finally, it offers a sustained but balanced cautionary note about the role of anthropologists in contemporary conflicts. Unlike the more polemically inclined calls that have come out against the participation of anthropologists in the armed struggles in Iraq and Afghanistan (Roberto Gonzales and Hugh Gusterson), Price’s careful research, balanced analysis and understated conclusions make his critique much more effective and persuasive.

Let me briefly sketch out the book’s contents. Price has chosen to structure the narrative plot of the volume around the institutions and organisations in which anthropologists were involved. After a brief sketch of the role of anthropology in the First World War, he goes on to examine disciplinary dynamics on American campuses, the American Anthropological Association and the Society for Applied Anthropology. It is here that Price also offers an outline of the activities of anthropologists in other Allied and Axis countries. The volume then goes on to chart out in careful detail other agencies that saw the participation of members of our discipline: the Departments of War, Interior and State as well as the White House, the office of Naval Intelligence; the Cross Cultural Survey Project, the Smithsonian Institution’s War Background Studies, the Office of Inter-American Affairs, the War Relocation Board, or the FBI’s Special Intelligence Service. All in all, several anthropologists participated in various organisational activities within these institutions and spanned a large gamut of issues ranging from the relocation of Japanese citizens of the United States to camps, gathering intelligence, offering advice on strategic matters (to President Roosevelt), gauging Japanese morale or offering analyses of areas germane to American domination such as Africa, Asia and Latin America. The penultimate part of the book is devoted to the beginnings of the Cold War as it impacted American anthropology and the conclusion leads him to comment on contemporary predicaments.

Throughout his analysis, Price is careful to point out that one must be careful not to simply reduce the dynamics of the war to a willing and uncritical mobilisation of anthropologists by the American state. He shows not only that such cases did indeed exist, but that anthropologists were often critical of state policies (as in regard to the internment camps), and that their opinions were often neglected or rejected. No less important are the unintended consequence of our discipline being a public one, meaning that anthropological knowledge was often used by other agents (from the military or security institutions) once it was publicly available. Throughout the book, Price offers comparative angles that are crucial not for letting American anthropologists ‘off the hook’ as it were, but to place their work in the context of what has been defined as the ‘Good War’. One of Price’s main conclusions, as I see it, is that overall the ethical implications and (I would add) political meaning of applying professional and disciplinary knowledge to the war effort were not given much attention. To a great extent, this situation had to do with the fact that there was a very strong and wide consensus about the justifiability of the Second World War, but the lack of professional and disciplinary self-reflection underlay, as Price convincingly shows, the participation of many anthropologists in the post-war creation and maintenance of American hegemony in many parts of the
world (through sponsored research, work in
areas studies programmes or the very choice
of areas for research).

To conclude, this is an excellent volume
that is very well written, mixes
anthropological and historical analysis with
rich descriptions, and offers a multiplicity of
cases to bolster its contentions. Most
importantly, it offers a cautionary note in
regard to alliances between members of our
discipline and state institutions such as the
military.

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Sarró, Ramon. 2009. The politics of
religious change on the upper Guinea coast.
Iconoclasm done and undone. Edinburgh:
Edinburgh University Press for International

Ramon Sarró’s book on religious and political
changes among the Baga of Guinea is a richly
documented contribution to the
anthropology of modernity. Described as a
study of the relationship between iconoclasm
and political transformation, the book centres
on a major watershed event in the modern
history of the Baga people; namely the
jihadist movement that took place in 1956/7
on the eve of independence of today’s
Republic of Guinea (Conakry). The Islamic
iconoclast movement implied the physical
destruction of ritual icons, such as masks and
shrines, as well as violent actions towards
ritual specialists. The author holds that if it
had only been for the physical oppression of
ritual objects, the Baga, who were once
known for a rich religious and ritual material
culture, would probably not have abandoned
their local religious practice. The real cause of
religious change should instead be understood
as the concurrent, more lasting and efficient
anti-colonial movement led by the famous
Sékou Touré, who was to become lifelong
dictatorial president of post-colonial Guinea.

Among the coastal Baga people a Jihadist
movement preceded and paved the way for a
secular political movement that facilitated the
transition of the Baga into a general Guinean
national community in the making. As a
result, the Baga ‘lost’ both their local religion
and political culture.

Ramon Sarró is wary of cultural
reification; that is, to claim the notion of some
original or traditional Baga culture, but he
raises at the same time a related and relevant
question as to how a ‘people’ came to perceive
of their ‘customs’ (kutum), religious and
political, as an obstacle to modernisation.
How, in other words, does the local reification
of culture come about? The answer provided
by Sarró is sociological and instrumentalist:
the reification or objectification of local
culture is due to a generational conflict. It
results from the youth’s revolt against an
alleged male regime of dominant and
oppressive elders. Baga youth in the late 1950s
and early 1960s, and their contemporary
ethnographer, viewed ‘culture’, especially
the secrecy-laden local religious practice, as a
privileged means of Baga elders to control and
exploit the young, non-initiated part of the
population. To liberate themselves and
embrace modernity, the Baga youth therefore
decided to join forces with the religious and
political movements that were introduced and
led by outsiders.

Taking its departure in contemporary
Baga preoccupations with their own religious
and political past, a major part of the book is
historical in outline. It builds on an
ethnography that is produced out of a
triangulation of interviews with key actors in
past iconoclast events, archival studies and
interviews with today’s youth. The book has
three parts: a first, contextualising part that
tracks the ‘origins’ or the ‘making’ of the Baga
during pre-colonial and colonial times; a
second, pivotal part focusing on the outcomes
of the iconoclast and anti-colonial movements
and that may also be read as a break with the
past and the ‘un-making’ of the Baga; a final
part highlighting the performance of Baga
cultural heritage by contemporary Baga
youth and elders in the form of public

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masquerades and football tournaments. This closing part of the book may also be read as the story of the ‘re-making’ of the Baga as they come to consider their own cultural and historical past as essential for claims to political influence and territorial belonging and identity at the turn of the century.

Ramon Sarro’s historical ethnography attests to an impressive historical scholarship written with strong empathy. He definitely merits to be recognised as ‘The’ Baga ethnographer given the bulk of detailed ethnographic descriptions of language, rice-farming methods, settlement patterns, etc., as well as the effort to elucidate the volatile notion of Baga identity and grasp the common denominators of a diversified and highly differentiated group of people living on the Atlantic coast. However, and in spite of a consistent critical, self-reflexive style of Sarro, the book has a few flaws. In particular, the author’s close identification with his Baga interviewees’ preoccupation with ‘lost’ culture risks turning the entire study into salvage ethnography, which is definitely contrary to the stated aim of the book. Inevitably, but non-reflexively, the author now and again also seems to have fallen victim to the local practice of secrecy, which consists of pretending that there is more to the thing (i.e. abolished masked rituals) than what actually meets the eye. One conspicuous omission is the relatively recent work on Baga ritual material culture by art historians, which is mentioned in passing only, but certainly overlaps with the focus of this book. Missing, too, is a discussion with related, recent studies of the consequences of Guinean state iconoclasm (e.g. Højbjerg 2007; Lamp 1996). A comparative perspective would have provided the author with a more complex set of causes and alternative trajectories of people’s commitment to local religion than the ‘youth revolt’ thesis put forward in this book. Moreover, a comparison may have contributed to answer the difficult question why iconoclasm apparently succeeds in some places and fails in others. These omissions apart, the author generously acknowledges the inspiration he has found in many of his forbears’ work. There is little doubt that this book is a standing contribution to the historical and cultural knowledge of the Upper Guinea Coast and that it will be fully acknowledged by coming generations of regional scholars.

References

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This lavishly illustrated volume attempts to trace the development of and assess the current ‘state of play’ of contemporary art in Malta, with a view to exploring the potential for developing a sociological, philosophical and anthropological account of the relationship between art and society in Malta. Contemporary art in Malta is particularly fertile, the more so given the small scale of this former British Mediterranean colony. The book’s five substantive chapters – four by practising artists, the fifth a collaborative piece by an artist and an anthropologist – cover architecture, installation work, painting, performance art, photography, collage, drawing, ceramics across a range of styles from cubist to contemporary conceptual work. Metaphors of flow are prevalent in descriptions of Maltese society, as befits a small island context that has been ruled by successive colonial powers. The reference to ‘cross-currents’ in the title is familiar. Less so the metaphor of nomadic life developed in the editor’s Introduction, to describe the
contemporary Maltese artist. If the ‘cross-current’ implies an insular perspective, in which the artist sits and waits for the next outside influence to hit, the new nomadic artist travels – to learn, to teach, to exhibit, to sell. The metaphor signals a self-confident community – even a movement – keen to put Maltese art on the map. This volume seeks to do that.

The first chapter, by Kenneth Wain, reflects on the emergence and development of abstract art in Malta from the 1960s onwards. It establishes perhaps the dominant theme of the volume as a whole, and indeed one of the dominant themes of Maltese society in the late 20th century: the place of religion. Malta is dominantly Roman Catholic, and art was historically dominated by religious themes; the art market dominated by Church commissions. The emergence of abstract art coincided with Malta’s independence (1964) and the reforms to Catholicism issued by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Wain sees the development of abstract art as a search to realise a fulfilment of human spirituality, in this new context of personalised religiosity and post-colonial subjectivity.

Religious themes, too, are central to Isabelle Borg and Paul Clough’s chapter on the body in Maltese art. They argue that the division between sacred and secular is impossible in the Maltese context, where Catholicism is ubiquitous and establishes itself as a central issue for art. This is nowhere more clear than in contemporary artists’ preoccupation with bodily suffering – which in both traditional Catholic iconography and in its contemporary reconfiguration honours the body suffering as a form of truth. The theme of truth leads Borg and Clough to speculate on the Maltese artist’s role as a ‘great intellectual’ in a Gramscian sense – ‘making . . . personal statements that have a social effect. They see themselves as owing to society at large a message of truth’ (p. 122).

As truth-makers, Maltese artists continuously confront religious Truth, and Raphael Vella’s chapter on art and Catholicism identifies three branches of the art/religion nexus: liturgical functionalism; spirituality as personal encounter; and ‘anthropological’ exploration of religion as culture. All three are both reproduced and subverted in contemporary art. Liturgical functionalism is subverted through what Vella terms ‘religious post-production’, or the use of religious objects and icons to generate new works of art. Spirituality as personal encounter is subverted through humour and parody. Explorations of religion as culture, or religious experience, are subverted through the spectacularisation of religion in installation, and particularly the use of TV and other technologies. What emerges is a commentary on religion, but also more broadly, a commentary on human life.

John Baldacchino also explores the potential of installation as spectacle, not only to question the place of religion, but also of history, tradition, space and place. Installation art, he argues, is out of time, and as such replaces representation with a phenomenological immediacy that permits an unsettling of history. This perspective rails against nationalistic identity-making through art, and allows a focus, for example, on the tricky politics of contemporary African migration to, and asylum-seeking within, Malta. For Baldacchino, ‘the fact that Maltese artists – some more than others – take the issues of immigration to the core of their work is not only laudable but more so indicates that, more than ever before, art in Malta has crossed the threshold of political consciousness’ (pp. 219–20).

In the final substantive chapter, Peter Brincat explores the challenges of the most public of art forms, architecture, caught as it is between a progressive creativity and the Heritage agenda promoted by institutions such as the Malta Environment and Planning Authority. This challenge generates heterogeneous outcomes, which Brincat characterises as language games, framed in contrast to established vernacular forms: the Arabic-influenced domestic architecture – block-like, cuboid – and the Baroque religious architecture. Brincat, then, returns us to religion as a central issue in contemporary Maltese art, and it is the chapters that deal

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with this theme more squarely – those by Wain, but particularly Borg and Clough, and Vella – that begin to achieve the aim of marrying an art historical with a sociological or anthropological account of contemporary Malta. As the socio-political and artistic timeline – published as an appendix and compiled by Katya Borg – demonstrates, the inter-weaving of politics, religion and art has dominated Maltese society since at least the 1950s. It has also dominated Maltese artists’ struggle to understand selfhood. As Borg and Clough point out, ‘Catholicism in its Italianate visual and acoustic expression establishes a problematic for most artists’ (p. 93). They may reproduce it, reconfigure it, challenge it or desecrate it, but it is ever-present. Like the ‘crossed-out God’ of Bruno Latour’s imaginary modernist constitution, it serves as a reference point even where it appears to have disappeared.

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The volume represents a long-awaited collection of essays pertinent to an ever-growing field of both scholarship and activism with regard to minority issues. It explores the processes of representation, political positioning and identity formation of so-called indigenous groups shaped by the uses of electronic media. It assembles case studies covering a wide range of topics and media institutions across the globe, from Radio in Colombia to Maori cinema. Contributors stem from media and communication studies, history and anthropology, but also include film-makers as activists working with international organisations and NGOs. Some contributors introduce themselves as members of indigenous groups. In their introduction, the editors emphasise that today electronic media enable new means of expression, promote self-awareness and political communication for hitherto marginalised ethnic groups. Most of the 16 studies impressively bear witness that the latter, certainly often threatened by processes of political, cultural and economic deprivation, cannot be conceived as passive victims of liberal economic policies only. Recently, they successfully claimed a part in the distribution of resources and representation in political arenas. The fact that their activists are using global networks of communication (e.g. the Zapatista movement, Halkin) leads to a growing ‘International indigeneism’ (p. 8), a new level of political connectedness and identity formation. Activists not only make use of new technologies and modes of communication, they assign them a particular meaning relevant to issues and stakes of their life-worlds, develop new genres of media production and distinct aesthetic perspectives. Indigenous media are not presenting projects to conserve a traditional past, but rather form part of a ‘new indigeneity’, informed by international law and advocacy.

Following the introduction, the first part focuses on video and film and discusses the poetics of media production. The chapters range from an overview on indigenous video production in Latin America to Maori cinema in New Zealand, video production among the Inuit and educational programmes produced by Cherokee Indians. The second part explores the use of media as emancipatory projects of minorities or marginalised sections of the population, such as indigenous media in Burma, women’s radio in Canada or the role of community radio in Colombia. The third part discusses the relationship between media uses and identity processes, especially of established national and ethnic minorities (the Sami, Welsh, small ethnic groups in Russia) in relation to state policies in the media sector. The final part comprises studies on digitalisation projects (the Vicuña in Brazil, Aborigines in Australia), and a seminal essay by Ginsburg. Given the recent controversial
debate on the academic usefulness of the concept ‘indigenous’, triggered by Kuper (2003), such a volume cannot, however, ignore the problematic pertinent to discourses of indigeneity, regardless of the position one is taking in this debate. The editors certainly hint to a conceptual fuzziness when comparing the range of cases subsumed under the heading ‘indigenous’ (first-comers to a region, small ethnic groups, survivors of assimilation with ancient livelihoods or lifestyles..., and define indigenous media (in their own words ‘loosely’) as ‘forms of media expression conceptualised, produced, and/or created by Indigenous peoples across the globe’ (p. 2), thus circumventing a clearer conceptualisation of indigenous media producers, different (or not) to those from other minorities, cultural movements, religious, ethnic or politically marginalised groups. The actual particularity of these endeavours different to other community media projects, but also mainstream, state controlled, commercialised media which often also promote minority program, is not always clear. The reader will also notice the considerable heterogeneity of the range of cases with regard to the way in which indigeneity, in legal as well as culture terms, is conceived, from groups still marginalised by colonial and post-colonial regimes to those now at the centre of national politics. This certainly opens a wide field for comparative studies, to detect similarities and differences with regard to the way in which media enter local life-worlds, change patterns of communication and shape political activism in various contexts. The apparent differences between the groups discussed here, in terms of power relations, legal positions and economic capital, underline, however, the need for more viable conceptual frameworks to study media activism, possibly integrating similar emancipatory projects of media production that do not carry the label ‘indigenous’ at all. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the volume does not comprise case studies from Africa where the term ‘indigenous’ is mainly relevant to some ethnic groups in Southern Africa, and does not always carry the same legal connotation when compared with most Latin American states.

Nevertheless, the volume impressively highlights the ‘call to action’ function of these media in political conflicts, to oppose discrimination, to obtain political rights and join the struggle against the violation of human rights. It demonstrates the importance of self-presentation and cultural creativity for minority groups, thus challenging accounts of their situation in the mainstream media. The most impressive contributions by Murrilo (community radio in Colombia) and Buddle (Native women’s radio in Canada) perfectly refer to the interrelation of media appropriation, the pertinence of alternative contents and the role of media in political conflicts. Furthermore, essays such as the study by Brooten on the struggle of media activists in Myanmar together with NGOs against the military regime accounts for the seditious potential of those media today. The book offers well-researched case studies and is thus of great value for all interested in media studies, the study of political movements as well as development studies.

Reference

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