



# Book Reviews

## Review Essay

**Can Islam Be French? Pluralism and Pragmatism in a Secularist State.** *John R. Bowen.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. 230 pp.

**Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism.** *Cihan Tuğal.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. 306 pp.

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France and Turkey are linked historically as secular republics. In 1923, Mustafa Kemal (known as Atatürk) took France as his model, accomplishing in a brief few years what it took more than a century for the French to fully articulate. (Although the Revolution of 1789 subsumed the clergy to state control for a time, it wasn't until 1905 that France definitively separated church and state.) The Turkish word for secularism (*laiklik*) is derived from the French *laïcité* and is taken to have a similar meaning. It's not only that the political domain is supposed to be neutral, a place where religious truth cannot decide matters of society and state, but also that the primary identity of a citizen is not religious; his or her first loyalty must be to the nation-state. In both countries, education has been the key to promoting and maintaining secular ideals. In both countries, too, national unity is conceived in ways that exclude recognition of ethnic or other cultural or communal differences, and the state has found ways to regulate religious institutions. But in Turkey, unlike France, such regulation is more direct (the state pays the salaries of some 80,000 clerics) and, from the Kemalist period on, religion has been valued as providing the moral and social fabric of the nation.

Despite the similarities, though, each nation has had a very different religious and political history. The founding of the Turkish republic was accompanied by the extermination of Armenians, the relocation of Greeks, and the harassment of Jews; in the end 99 percent of the Turkish population were Muslims. Turkey was for many decades a one-party state, its politics policed by a succession of military interventions. When parties did emerge, they were, for the most part, secular. In the 1980s and 1990s, oppositional

politics began to be organized around demands for the representation of the religious and Islamic character of the nation. In contrast, in France, with a multiparty system and so a different approach to mediating conflict, secularizers managed to accommodate aspects of Catholicism (the religion of the majority) in ways that largely (but not entirely) undercut its politicization.

These different histories are important when it comes to thinking about secularism today. In both Turkey and France some political figures have declared a "crisis"; "religion" is seen as a threat to the political values, indeed to the very identity, of the nation. But while in Turkey, this is the religion of the vast majority of the country; in France, the danger is thought to come from a small, disadvantaged minority, many of them former colonial subjects (largely from North and West Africa), or their children and grandchildren. In both cases, the fact that Islam is at issue resonates with a popular international discourse about the "clash of civilizations," in which the story is quickly reduced to a set of oppositions between the violent ambitions of jihad and the progressive achievements of secular modernity.

That ethnographic work is one way to undercut such reductive thinking is evident in the two books under review. Both offer close readings within an interpretive frame and so enable us to make sense of the complexities of social and political life. The authors introduce us to individuals whose stories and comments give a memorable, firsthand impression of how and why change takes place. And change is the focus of both books. John Bowen's study details the ways in which pragmatic adaptations of Muslims to French society occur, often through minute institutional adjustments and innovative Koranic interpretations. The great achievement of his book is to challenge, with on-the-ground observations, stereotypes that portray these immigrants as incapable of ever becoming "fully French." Cihan Tuğal offers a new perspective on recent political developments in Turkey by focusing on a poor community on the outskirts of Istanbul. He argues that the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) there (and, by implication, in Turkey as a whole) is a sign not of the impending overthrow of secularism but, rather, of the partial incorporation of Islam into a neoliberal project. Taken together, these books suggest that there is no "Islam" that stands outside its historical and political context, no immutable religion that transcends the circumstances within which its practitioners live.

Bowen's book shows in detail how adjustments are made to norms said to be based in scripture. In this, he points out, French Muslims are not unique:

Muslims long have debated the relationships among ethical and practical judgments, and asked whether the place where one lives determines the nature of one's religious obligations. In other places and at other times the issue has been framed differently. In the fifteenth century, Islamic judges took into account local values and practices to the extent that these did not violate God's commands. In the twentieth and twenty-first, Islamic scholars living in Morocco, Indonesia, and North America ask whether or not cross-cultural differences in gender values justify differences in Islamic law. In India, a country where Muslims are a minority but have longstanding religious institutions, the questions concern how these institutions can fit into a Hindu-majority country under the rule of a secular state. It is thus not unusual for Muslims to consider new norms for life in new social situations. [p. 138]

Focusing on scholars, educators, and other public figures, Bowen documents the operations of what he calls "practical reasoning." As these figures contend with the dilemmas facing their followers, they balance their religious beliefs with the need to accommodate the rules of the secular state. These are the kinds of questions they confront: "What should an Islamic secondary school look like in a secularist society? How does one teach Islam in a way that remains connected with global deliberations *and also* provide guides for French living? What should mosques do? Should a marriage be conducted in a religious manner or at city hall? May I borrow money at interest from a bank to buy my home?" (p. 5) The answers vary, but it is their pragmatic, adaptive nature that Bowen emphasizes.

On the question of interest-charging banks, for example, one imam, agreeing with a ruling by a council of jurists that at once affirmed prohibitions of usury and allowed that Muslims in Europe who had no other options could obtain a mortgage, commented that loans were acceptable for those who wanted to leave poor neighborhoods to improve family life. Muslims who objected to this position, he said, "do not understand what social life is like here" (p. 141). Others worried that having to pay interest would only increase the debt of Muslim families and suggested alternative arrangements (gradual payments to a seller, pooling of family funds, continuing to rent) as a way of addressing the matter. Bowen's point is that, whatever the advice offered, "the main issue is how best to help Islam and Muslims, and not how best to interpret the writings of the Hanbalī or Mālikī school" (p. 142). A similar kind of reasoning informs advice about marriage. Couples who want to bypass French requirements for a civil marriage are told that, because no Shari'a courts exist in France, divorce

will be impossible to obtain should the question arise. Women, especially, will have no recourse for protecting property or claiming custody of children if they were not legally married in a state civil ceremony. The civil ceremony does not rule out a religious one, the imams say, but it should not be avoided. In any case, it is perceived by some Muslim scholars in France as strengthening the marriage contract—the contract itself being the important Islamic requirement (pp. 165–169).

Bowen presents a wide range of fascinating information: about the networks of associational life Muslims have constructed (incl. groups in which women have leadership roles [p. 51]); about religious schools (in which children "learn to retain the distinctive commitments of their own religion and to engage fully in civic life" [p. 183]); and about how the Islamic legal tradition is used flexibly to permit adaptation to the realities of life in a secular state (substituting contributions to the poor for animal sacrifice, to take one example). He reminds readers that this is the same process by which "Catholics and Jews were integrated into Republican space through their associations, and successful integration has not meant a diminution of religion-based associative life" (p. 182). One example Bowen uses is of a student in an Islamic school who "worked outward from Islamic associational activities, to campaigning for a new mosque, to fielding an electoral slate to advance the mosque's cause, to joining the municipal government. Integration begins at home, with the values of home" (p. 196). The point of this example is not that religion infiltrates and subverts politics, but that it provides an impetus for civic participation.

These examples of pragmatic reasoning make use of accepted French social forms—legally registered associations, divorce by mutual consent, private agreements—to legitimate institutions that may be innovative in specific form (mosques, outdoor abattoirs, talaq divorce) but that legally and morally extend to Muslims those rights already secured by others in France. Properly understood, *laïcité* guarantees that the state will manage religions in an even-handed way, such that Muslims, too, can carry out religious obligations and can take advantage of the possibilities offered by French law without suffering religious-based discrimination. At stake in each case are substantively equal rights, not special group rights. [p. 197]

Bowen's book is a powerful response to those dogmatic French republicans who argue that Muslim "communalism" is unprecedented and so a threat to public order and the unity of the nation. It is a plea to French policymakers for "value-pluralism," for the same kind of pragmatic reasoning that Muslims engage in and that, historically, has enabled the secular state to accommodate the diverse religious

beliefs and practices of its populations without compromising *laïcité*.

Muslims, of course, are a minority in France. Despite sometimes hysterical warnings that, unchecked by bans on headscarves and burqas, they will impose an Iranian-style theocracy, there is little reason—confirmed by Bowen's ethnographic intelligence—to believe that will happen. Turkey is another story. There, not only are the overwhelming majority Muslim but also political protests against the state have, in recent times, most often taken religious form. According to Cihan Tuğal, the mobilization of opposition in the 1980s and 1990s involved the "Islamization" of daily life and of politics; this was interrupted by military intervention in 1997 (in the name of *laiklik*) and the "disarticulation" and then "incomplete rearticulation" of the relationship between political and civil society (p. 233). "In 2001, many former radicals sought the solution to the problems of Islamism by hybridizing it with traditionalism and Turkish nationalism" (p. 113). The result was the success of the moderate wing of political Islam, the AKP, which won parliamentary elections in 2002 (36.16 percent of the vote) and again in 2007 (46.66 percent). At several moments, the party's efforts to change the constitution were stopped by the secular offices of the Prosecutor of the Republic and the Constitutional Court, but the AKP's predominance and electoral success at the local and national levels continued. Sultanbeyli, where Tuğal did his ethnographic fieldwork, was still in 2000–01 "the fortress of Islamism nationwide," supporting radical Islamist parties that challenged capitalist practices in the name of religious belief. By 2006 it "ended up as just another conservative district" supporting the AKP (pp. 11–12).

There are different assessments of the AKP's success: its very moderation is deceptive according to some Turkish secularists. They insist that it simply provides a cover for the infusion of Shari'a law into the institutions of the country. For others—including many outside observers—the AKP holds out the possibility that religion can motivate popular mobilizations that are consistent with democratic politics. Tuğal puts Turkey's recent history in a different frame. Adapting Gramsci's notions of hegemony and "passive revolution," he argues that the most radical challenges to the secular and capitalist state have been deflected by the AKP; indeed, former radicals and their followers have been turned in "a market-oriented, liberal, and individualist direction" (p. 239). This is not the result of an inevitable process of modernization but, rather, of the way the AKP, supported by Islamists who had prospered economically, built political culture around Islamic themes.

During AKP rule, Islamic street action decreased and tended not to target state authority. As an Islamic party was ruling Turkey, there was constant worry that any mobilization that targeted the state would produce

anti-Islamic results. The surviving Islamic street mobilization reinforced the increasing Turkish nationalism. Among religious people, there was less interest in ideologically oriented politics at the everyday level too, as politics had come to mean making self-interested use of their party's empowerment. At the same time, mosques and sermons became more activist, but this activism was restricted to the interindividual level: imams did not incite people to transform society at large. This toned down and restricted activism amounted to what I have called "the mobilization of demobilization." That is, even the existing mobilization reinforced hegemony and popular passiveness. This was all possible because of Islamic activists' and pious people's increasing integration with the state through identification with the party and its leaders. [p. 239]

Tuğal's reports of conversations with local figures, and his tracking of their changing political engagement and party affiliations, give additional concreteness to this description. He shows how the AKP "appropriated certain Islamist understandings of religion (social solidarity, purified religion, etc.) to put them in the service of capital accumulation." The poor of this squatter community "consented to the rule of experts, as these experts and the politicians who appointed them were good Muslims" (p. 249). At the same time, they increasingly acted in conformity with values that were "work oriented, disciplined, and productive" (p. 249). In the process, secular elites retained control of politics, "the provincial bourgeoisie and the religious orders also prospered. Islam became a defining feature of national unity, without reducing the salience of Turkish identity" (p. 250). In effect, the AKP integrated those who were once marginal to politics into both the economic and the political system; they came to identify and to act as citizens.

Tuğal briefly addresses the effect of these changes on the educational system, long the key to secularist hegemony. In Sultanbeyli, he notes that while religious families had long accepted the idea that (secular) public education was indispensable for the future of their children, they also increasingly distrusted the corrupt state officials who administered it. "Neglecting the larger picture, where neoliberalization had removed immense funds from public education, they put all the blame . . . on the representatives of the state" (p. 92). This had the effect both of switching political allegiance to the AKP, which claimed that Muslim leaders were by definition above corruption, and of opening the way for increased religious influence in the school curriculum. Tuğal offers no predictions about what effects this will have in the long term on the secular character of the state.

Although some tensions were exacerbated in the process (in Sultanbeyli between Kurds and Turks; nationally between secular and religious Turks), Turkey's "passive revolution" contrasts with what has happened in Egypt and

Iran, where sharp class divisions are stoked by religious mobilizations. Tuğal briefly compares the political histories of those countries with Turkey, arguing that renewed attention to the relationships among civil society, political society, economy, and the state, but especially to the role of political leadership at all levels, is the key to understanding the different paths these countries have taken.

For Turkey, the question remains to what extent the cultural pressures on politicians from religious constituents will alter the relationship between state and society: will the AKP manage to maintain a distinction between political and civil society at a time of increasingly Islamic identification? And what will become of public education, once the guarantee of secularism? Will Turkey be able to endorse the kind of value-pluralism Bowen suggests for France? (In Turkey, this would mean equal recognition of those with contested Muslim identities—Alawis, Kurds—and those who follow secular lifestyles.) Tuğal offers no answers. His book does, however, suggest that the contingencies of politics and history are important, if unpredictable, factors in explaining what occurs. And it illustrates as well, the enormous contribution made by ethnographic fieldwork for understanding how social transformation takes place.

Although the histories treated by these two books differ in many ways, and although they do not take secularism as their object of study, they nonetheless raise a common set of issues about the meanings of secularism in the 21st century. Does secularism require banishing religion from public space? In France today, one would think that is the case, although as Bowen argues, it was not the way Catholics, Protestants, and Jews were integrated into the republic in earlier times. Rather, “value pluralism in associational life, in religious circles, and in the family” (p. 196) enabled the preservation of religious and cultural heritages but did not weaken the political strength of the secular state. In Turkey, where secularism in its most dogmatic form was imposed from above by urban and military elites (and is still associated with extreme forms of nationalism), an increasingly public presence of Islam is, paradoxically, a sign of democratization. But, as Tuğal reminds us, historically, the consolidation of the secular nation eliminated religious pluralism, but not religion, as a feature of unified national identity.

The conclusion one draws from both of these books is that singular definitions of national identity that repress the existing plurality of cultural and religious identifications in the name of unity actually endanger democratic and republican ideals. Whether the result is an intensification of anti-Muslim discrimination in France, or a threatened assault on alternative cultures (Alawis, Kurds, secularists) in Turkey, the neutrality of political space is compromised. Although these books don't tell us how to protect that space, they suggest that insisting on pluralism—on the fact that nations are composed of differences whose interactions

and representations constitute the practice of politics—is the challenge that the next generations of democratic political leaders must face.

## Review Essay

**Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary.** *Paul Rabinow and George E. Marcus with James D. Faubion and Tobias Rees.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. 141 pp.

**Navigators of the Contemporary: Why Ethnography Matters.** *David A. Westbrook.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. 152 pp.

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What has anthropology to say about climate change, the bailout of banks, the war in Afghanistan, or the emergence of new lifeforms? What does an anthropology of the contemporary look like? Who are the navigators of the contemporary, and why does ethnography still matter?

More than 20 years after James Clifford and George E. Marcus's *Writing Culture* (1986) had put an end to anthropology's Golden Age, the two books under review closely examine new developments in the discipline in the aftermath of this event. In *Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary*, George Marcus, Paul Rabinow, and James Faubion are in conversation with a young German anthropologist, Tobias Rees. An anthropologist starts a series of intergenerational dialogues with other anthropologists about the anthropology of the contemporary; this is indeed a view from the inside. In turn, David A. Westbrook's *Navigators of the Contemporary* is a look from the outside; based on his conversations with George Marcus and Douglas Holmes, this professor of law curiously looks over the fence and tries to find out, as his subtitle suggests, *Why Ethnography Matters*. Westbrook does so without any references or other academic restrictions; the essay form complements perfectly the dialogue of his colleagues. Thus, conversations serve as the common denominator for these books. Even more so, conversations are also one of the results of these reflections about the anthropology of the contemporary. After *Writing Culture*, multisited ethnography enables us to identify specific situations of relevance and to open them up for dialogue and conversation.

Indeed, there is a lot to talk about. *Writing Culture* came as a shock to anthropology in the 1980s; it was both avant-garde and shaped new generations of anthropologists. The case studies in the recently published

*Multi-Sited Ethnography* (Falzon 2009) give evidence of the long-lasting effect of this refashioning and refunctioning of anthropology. It is exactly the contemporary that defines the still experimental character of this approach, as both books discuss with great scrutiny and from a more theoretical perspective.

The world changed several times since the *Writing Culture* moment, and the question as to what the contemporary might mean is more open than ever. Gone are those simple illusions that we can grasp the world in clear-cut oppositions between us and them, here and there, the colonized and the colonizers, the rich and the poor, nature and culture. These oppositions did not disappear, but the situation is more complex. The anthropologist is no longer naïvely a participant-observer, a simple narrator or an advocate of the subaltern; instead, the ethnographer is a navigator who steers through epistemologically and ontologically troubled seas. The field dictates the design of the ethnography, which in turn is a common enterprise of the anthropologist and her counterpart; both the ethnographer's and the "native's" point of view meet in the laboratory situation of the *paraethnographic*. George Marcus, who ceaselessly tries to define an anthropological project that does not disconnect the anthropology of the contemporary from Malinowski's ethnography, coined this new term. There is more to multisited ethnography than only a spatial connotation; it is also untimely contemporary—as it is beautifully expressed in Westbrook's book title *Navigators of the Contemporary*.

There is both a humble modesty and an exclusive elitist element in this challenging approach. Both books guide the readers step by step to an understanding of what it means for anthropology to be contemporary. They slowly unfold their concepts in conversations, as a dialogic process.

Although the title of *Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary* lists Rabinow, Marcus, Faubion, and Rees as authors, it clearly originates from an idea of the then graduate student Tobias Rees. He had made it from Tuebingen, Germany, to Berkeley, California, conducting research as an assistant of Rabinow in Paris. After reading a correspondence between Marcus and Rabinow about the future of anthropology, he had the idea of bringing them together for a discussion. He managed to do so in 2004 at Rice University in Houston, where James Faubion joined them. Rees also wrote the excellent fore- and afterword; he steered with great oversight the sometimes almost esoteric conversations, summed up the extrapolations of his famous counterparts, and edited the book.

What is anthropology today? This is a classical anthropological question, which has to be answered in each new generation. It is indicative for this kind of anthropology that this is done in the form of a conversation in which four anthropologists are like actors in a play that is called "anthropology of the contemporary." Marcus is the main

actor, and he defends a strictly disciplinary position. Even though *Writing Culture* caused a considerable storm way back when, Marcus was and still is concerned about the integrity of anthropology as a discipline. He indeed identifies and deeply believes in the anthropological enterprise. In times of the interdisciplinary success of ethnography, he considers it even more important to figure out what anthropology means and how it changes: "I think it is of the utmost importance to keep arguing about the purely internal, disciplinary tendencies of anthropology" (p. 47).

Rabinow is his ideal counterpart. He seems to be less concerned with the future of anthropology as a discipline than he is interested in defining the contemporary. History cannot explain completely the new assemblages that come into being for example in the life sciences. Again and again, he challenges Marcus with assumptions that go beyond traditional ethnography and beyond *Writing Culture*. In turn, Marcus displays a certain conservatism; a conservatism by the way, which is decidedly different from those who defend a "back-to-the-roots" anthropology against science studies, postmodernism, and the interdisciplinary inflation of ethnography. Instead, Marcus is interested in connecting with the past, while simultaneously prolonging the experimental momentum into the future of a paraethnography.

The other counterpart in this conversation is James Faubion. For him, *Writing Culture* meant the "deparochialization" of anthropology. Furthermore, the focus on people had to give space to an equal consideration of people and things. Science and technology studies are without a doubt one of the most influential forces that shifted anthropology's center of gravity: "For two decades now, there has been an increasing turn towards objects and the objective . . . of which selves might constitute of course a part but of which they are not necessarily the pivot or in any other sense the privileged party" (Faubion, p. 45). The influence of science and technology studies is to be found everywhere, but the ethnographic à la mode of anthropology is what makes a difference; science and technology studies mostly end up in short-term and goal-oriented research projects, without leaving the field enough time to really unfold.

The book is structured into seven dialogues, with the first three about the history of *Writing Culture* until the present, while the remaining chapters are about the current experimental situation. A common thread is the question of how to establish pedagogically and didactically in the discipline what once had started with *Writing Culture*. For many years now, George Marcus discusses the ethnographic situation in the light of the work of his graduate students, and it is a concern that is shared by all participants in this conversation.

Rabinow and Marcus look back at their "dissatisfactions and personal trajectories" that finally lead to the *Writing Culture* moment. The value of this look into the rear view is the context that these narratives provide. But most

of all it becomes once and for all clear that *Writing Culture* never intended to end anthropology, but to reinvent it.

After *Writing Culture*, the student body had changed; NGOs had won considerable influence, and the ethnographic interest had changed too. The new key terms were “reflexivity, identity, public culture, science studies” (Rees, p. 40), with a renewed political interest in anthropological “engagements with the sciences, with markets and finance, with the circulation of art, with the media” (Marcus, p. 47). But this experimental situation also had a backside: How to win back the students that got lost in interdisciplinary work? How to reconcile anthropology with the new horizons, methods, and vocabulary that was defining the ethnographic?

The second half of the book is dedicated to the systematic and slow development of designs for the anthropology of the contemporary in subsequent steps. The contemporary is “a technical term that allows us to decompose emergent phenomena . . . into different elements that are assembled into one form constitutive of the phenomenon in question” (Rees, p. 58)—Rees does a great job in summing up what is the result of a fascinating dialogue among intellectuals. In contrast to other specialists for the contemporary such as journalists, it is the permanent slowing down of each and every thing that defines the anthropological method. Multisited ethnography is not defined by the spatial alone but also by the temporal; it is exactly in this “untimeliness” where the design for the fieldwork emerges. It is here where paraethnography comes into play, which “corrects an approach to the design of fieldwork that flows from a now conventional and too literal understanding of multisitedness as simply following objective processes out there by some strategy” (Rees, p. 70). It is in the encounter with others, in the “nitty-gritty of fieldwork,” as Rees (p. 70) calls it, where the design of the ethnography emerges. Both Rabinow and Marcus have worked a lot with elites, and this is reflected in their approach. In work with life scientists, for example, the anthropologist and her counterpart engage in a very specific intellectual relationship, even though the object of critique and interest may lie somewhere else.

The conversation permanently comes back to the problem of how to institutionalize these new approaches in anthropology and how to teach them to graduate students. How can the time of preparation for the fieldwork (where important decisions for the design are already taken), fieldwork itself, and the resultant dissertation, be brought together? Marcus promotes the idea of the design studio, which he learned to understand from architects. Here the students are guided through the different stages of the project, while staying accountable to certain standard procedures: “This idea of a design process de-centers the significance and weight of the fieldwork process conventionally viewed and makes it more organic and balanced

with what occurs before and after the research” (Marcus, p. 83).

It is fascinating to follow the process of how certain definitions, terms, and practical ideas evolve out of these conversations. They are not just “there”; they are slowly made explicit through the back and forth of assumptions, questions, and mutual challenges. Anyway, sooner or later the reader wants to see what the ideal ethnography might look like. A few recent monographs such as Kim Fortun’s *Advocacy after Bhopal* (2001) are mentioned and shortly discussed, but the reader does not get recommendations because Marcus focuses on something else:

Well, I don’t dream of the ideal ethnography. Not to do so was one of the things I took away from the *Writing Culture* critique. Henceforth, you would not get prototypes, or exemplars, but techniques, strategies, moves that could be thought through and adapted to one’s own purposes. Unfortunately, anthropologists expected the new ethnography, the new exemplar, and it never came. [Marcus, p. 101]

Rabinow founded the Research Center for the Anthropology of the Contemporary at Berkeley, while Marcus has established after his move from Rice University to Irvine the Center for Ethnography. Both are model institutions, and the question is how far their influence will spread. There are also those who started with *Writing Culture* and reached positions from where they can rethink and renew the structure of dissertation projects and start conversations on the anthropology of the contemporary with a new generation of anthropology students. This small collaborative and dialogic book will serve them well as a permanent inspiration.

Reflexivity was one of the hallmarks of *Writing Culture*. Reflexivity is no problem for Westbrook, who is a professor of law and engaged in ongoing conversations with Douglas Holmes and George Marcus. When he presents his concept of conversation as a means to solve problems, he is his own best example. Conversation in the real sense is not some university talk or scholarly exchange; instead, conversation as powerful intervention into the contemporary means being engaged with diplomats, politicians, and the military. In proudly presenting a case of his own, he also belittles the anthropologists he talks about before he starts to praise their ingenuity. Westbrook represents exactly the elite counterpart that many anthropologists work with. Sometimes, reading his always elegant explanations reminded me of situations during my fieldwork on climate change, when my scientist-counterparts start to explain to me how I am working and why this is so important. Indeed Westbrook is very familiar with anthropology, he is a connoisseur, an empathic critic, and he pushes the limits forward. In

subsequent chapters he explains the what, where, who, when, how, and why of ethnographic fieldwork. The transition from admiration of the ethnographic method per se to an exploration of multisited fieldwork and the paraethnographic is fluent and often enough brilliant. He understands “the ethnography of present situations as an effort to map contemporary situations (not cultures) through the (always ready ethnographic) imaginations of interlocutors, and as refracted and synthesized by the anthropologist” (p. 44). His version of a “refunctioned ethnography” focuses on situations instead of biographies (p. 52); his ethnographers are “sailors not settlers” who weave webs of relationships in the form of liaisons (p. 53f.). “The point is to understand the situation, not the perspective of this or that individual” (p. 64).

When Westbrook relocates anthropology inside the university and evaluates its role in the world, he does so routinely, competent and from the inside. He also does this as an American; the role of the intellectual, the university system, and the politics he talks about are mostly decidedly from a U.S. perspective. But he always takes readers by the hand and leads them through the balkanized and bureaucratic university worlds, which are a safe haven anyway for the anthropologist; or he loves to explain the similarities and subtle differences between journalism and anthropology. He is never boring. He writes for the student who wants to understand the university, for his friends and for all those who want to understand and to be introduced into anthropology; an anthropology that is classic, romantic and multisited, postcritical and refunctioned—all at the same time.

Westbrook can be pretty conventional: “Ethnographies of present situations ask what is this modernity, and implicitly, what was lost when this version of the future was chosen” (p. 60). His whole attitude is romantic; dissertations are Lehr- und Wanderjahr, and the ethnographer as navigator writes her own bildungsroman. There is something poetic and something patronizing in his attitude: anthropology is like music, it can make you or others happy, and that is fair enough, too. Anyway, he knows how to show “why ethnography matters,” as the subtitle of his essay promises.

So what about the anthropology of the contemporary? What has anthropology to say about climate change, world economies, wars or other complex situations? Exactly this: there are situations, and they have to be identified, located, understood, and talked about as such. There is a great openness in this approach and attitude; it’s postcritical, but not arbitrary; it’s deeply democratic and as such almost antiscience: the anthropologist does not explain the world, as do many of his colleagues in science. Instead, he slowly unfolds complex arrangements, settings, and situations and makes them “conversational.” This is a huge accomplish-

ment and effort, and both books do a great job in describing the method of how this is achieved.

In the background and sometimes also explicitly, science studies are always somehow present. Anthropology lost many of its best to an interdisciplinary field with old and new centers. Ethnography has a better reputation than ever and is to be found everywhere. Marcus consequently acknowledges that Bruno Latour plays freely on the very field of anthropology. Indeed, Latour’s *Reassembling the Social* (2005) came more than once to my mind when reading the Dialogues. However, the actual practice of science studies differs more often than not from the anthropological enterprise; ethnography in science studies often is short termed, goal oriented, and technical. Anyhow, it is not true that they don’t care about people, as it is not true that multisited ethnography does not care about things. Multisited ethnography is encompassing people and things, and it’s the situation evoked by the anthropologist that defines the contemporary. Both books show convincingly that a well-designed ethnography does indeed matter.

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## Single Reviews

**Invaders as Ancestors: On the Intercultural Making and Unmaking of Spanish Colonialism in the Andes.** Peter Gose. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008. xviii + 380 pp.

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*Invaders as Ancestors* is an impressive contribution to the anthropological literature of postcolonial Andean society that brings together historically rich material under critical reflection. This carefully crafted social history provides

important new insights on the complex politicsymbolic transformation of the Andean ancestral cult under Christianity. In this work, Peter Gose argues that the appropriation of colonizers as remote ancestors and the adoption of Catholic saints as local deities were not only Andean ways to reconcile indigenous cults with Christianity but also political strategies that forced an intercultural dialogue with the dominant powers, first colonial and later republican. The author painstakingly documents the Andean political responses that eventually transform racialized subordination into intercultural alliance. Such intercultural alliance, the author suggests, could be traced back to pre-Conquest Andean incorporative practices that were designed to encourage interethnic collaboration and inclusion under Inca colonialism. For Gose, Andean political mechanisms were used during the colonial era to force displacement onto common ground. This eventually led to the reestablishment of a traditional form of moral economy and social solidarity in the Andes; it also facilitated the identification of Andean people with the new order and made the colonial experience more acceptable to them. In addition, the author posits, this forced cultural negotiation transformed indigenous power, which resulted in the rejection by commoners of traditional forms of Andean sovereignty and the development of a nonliberal, 19th-century, community-based nationalism, still evident in today's Andean society. At issue here is the need to rethink colonialism as a multilayered and intercultural process and also to reexamine the innovative role of cultural mechanisms in political conflicts.

In the introduction of the book, the author voices concerns on the tendency among contemporary postcolonial critics and cultural theorists to grant too much centrality to the colonizers. By excluding the colonized from their own history, some authors become inadvertently complicit in the production of hegemony. As an alternative approach, Gose proposes to pay greater attention to intercultural relations of power and to give visibility to the innovative character of indigenous politics. By revisiting subaltern politics from an interethnic viewpoint, the author intends to offer a new perspective on the ways in which both colonized and colonizers resituate and redefine themselves.

Over the course of an introduction, eight chapters, and conclusion, Gose carefully explores the periodization of colonial dislocation and missionary experience that have generated cultural hybridity. To clarify the ways in which this hybridity has occurred, the author pays special attention to the collapse of the *ayllu* as a ritual entity. Pre-Conquest Andean society consisted of localized ancestor-worshipping policies, called *ayllus*. These *ayllus* were the organizational foundation of the Andean world and functioned as local political groupings; they were class-stratified under the leadership of hereditary chiefs or *curacas*, and shared a common ancestral ideology. Embedded in a moral economy of ancestors-based dependency and

reciprocity for the well-being of the group, these *ayllus* were able, through shifting intergroup alliances, to readjust their ancestral narratives and rituals according to changing political circumstances. This element enabled structural relativity and flexibility to the pre-Conquest Andean political system. Under colonial rule, the *ayllu* came under attack and eventually collapsed. Its decline resulted from a number of elements: the establishment of indigenous towns (*reducciones*), the struggle over burials through the extirpation of native idolatry campaigns, and the burden of the colonial tributary economy. After its collapse, ancestral forms of worship were recreated around saints, mountain spirits, and the framing of Spaniards as remote Andean ancestors (*Viracochas*). The repudiation of mummy worshipping associated with the *ayllu* and the emergence of the mountain spirit cult ended indirect rule by depriving curacas of the legitimacy of their *ayllu*-based power, a form of power traditionally rooted in the ancestral role of curacas as protectors of descent groups' well-being. According to Gose, this ending of indirect rule has had an important political significance, which is reflected in more democratic Andean mortuary rituals based on residence, rather than descent; as well, it has helped to articulate the egalitarian coresidential community ideology that emerged during late-colonial and early republican times.

According to Gose, the new religious order that has come out of the clashes between Andeans and Spaniards is a form of cultural hybridity, which has forced cultural innovation on both parties. Interestingly, this intercultural articulation of colonial difference seems to be in part framed within an Andean logic, which traditionally encouraged the incorporation of the ancestral other for intergroup accommodation and empowerment. During colonialism, the framing of Spaniards as ancestors created new relations of kinship, obligation, and reciprocity; it also enabled Andean people to assimilate conquest and reconstitute their collective identity.

In this tightly argued and well-grounded study, Peter Gose presents an incisive argument that contributes significantly to the ethnohistorical field of cultural studies in the Andes and updates the debates on theorizing transculturation across colonial differences. The author's mastery and sensitivity are evident in his careful manipulation of historical narratives and his close examination of the myriad ways in which Andeans reacted and transformed both the Andean community itself and Peru's wider national culture. Peter Gose's work is highly original and will appeal to Andean specialists and the larger field of Latin American social scientists. It will demonstrate to students of colonial history that indigenous responses to colonial rule merit close attention in an effort to give due visibility to the colonized and recognition to their historic struggle for inclusion in the various stages of colonial discourse.

**Contested Histories in Public Space: Memory, Race, and Nation.** Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009. viii + 355 pp.

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Billed as a sequel to Walkowitz and Knauer's first edited volume, *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space* (2004), that is race and postcolonial theory oriented, *Contested Histories in Public Space* presents a collection of 13 essays, grouped in four broad thematic categories. Whereas volume 1 was organized around genres of public sites of memory, monuments, museums, cityscapes, public commemorations, and performances, volume 2 relies on a more evocative thematic organization: the four subheadings are titled "First Things First," "Colonial Legacies and Winners' Tales," "State Stories," and "Under-States Stories." In other words, the second time around the structuring principle is the commemorative actor, not the locale. However, the overarching concerns and questions remain very similar: how do postcolonial nations construct national identities in public space? Challenges to the national project come from above and below: first, from former colonial rulers and local elites that succeeded them, as well as global, neoliberal market forces that seek to turn identities into commodities; and, second, from indigenous peoples and minority groups who refuse to be subsumed under a totalizing national narrative. What sets volume 2 apart from its predecessor is its emphasis on race, or, in the words of the two editors in the introduction, a concern of "how race and empire are implicated, referenced, or obscured in the construction of national narratives as they inform the political calculus of the varied stakeholders in public history debates" (p. 2). The majority of the included chapters discuss case studies from Europe, the United States, and Latin America—the Caribbean, while the continents of Africa and Asia, as well as New Zealand and Australia, are represented by one article each. Five of the chapters were previously published in the *Radical History Review* (between 1999 and 2001).

The three chapters under "First Things First" focus on the ways in which indigenous peoples of Canada, New Zealand, and Australia have entered the public space of national museums and have been able to tell their own stories next to the more traditional white settler narratives. Although the inclusion of formerly suppressed voices in the public display of nationhood should be a reason for celebration, the authors show the price of the recent inclusion. Because national museums are increasingly commodified spaces, the celebration of what we may call a "white-washed multiculturalism" obscures the facts of ongoing political and economic disenfranchisement of indigenous and minority groups. In other words, indigenous peoples

may enter the public discussion on who belongs to a certain community, but they have to do it on white terms. The three museum exhibits that the reader is invited to reflect on may be an improvement over former, simplistic colonial histories, but the indigenous narratives' focus on resistance and survival against the odds leaves the visitors little room to reflect on the ways in which current nation-states perpetuate a politics of second-class citizenship.

Under the heading of "Colonial Legacies and Winners' Tales," the reader is invited into three more museum exhibits, this time in London, San Antonio (Texas), and on Ellis Island. Here, the focus shifts from the increasingly audible indigenous voices in public spaces to the shifting, and more accommodating, imperial voices of the British Library, which mounted an exhibit about the British East India Company in 2002; the Alamo Museum, which commemorates an initially obscure, lost battle that took place in 1836; and the Immigration Museum on Ellis Island, which celebrates "liberty and opportunity for all in America" (p. 149). In this second section, a critical display of racial difference in the colonial encounter remains similarly elusive. Indian merchants and colonial subjects are shown to be "Trading Places" (the name of the museum exhibit) with British East India Company employees, following the supposedly equalizing laws of the marketplace. The Alamo, both as historical site and narrative of the "ruthless Mexicans" who defeated the "noble Texans" (p. 128) was used to legitimize the exploitation and discrimination of Mexican immigrants to Texas, and to underwrite the myth of a white U.S. national identity born out of "noble" sacrifice. Ellis Island, a site of white nationalist projections of freedom and opportunity for all, became reinfused with patriotic fervor after 9/11. In September 2002, President Bush gave his anniversary speech from Ellis Island, justifying his retaliatory foreign policy as a defense of the most cherished ideals of the United States. In other words, imperial states and their memory agents (or agencies) are shown to oscillate between downplaying and reasserting their hegemonic powers in the service of strengthening the nation.

Three subsequent chapters present "State Stories," in which postcolonial state actors reinterpret former colonial architecture and official history taught in schools. For instance, the former nationalist South African Voortrekker Monument became part of the post-Apartheid tourism circuit, Ecuadorian history textbooks glorified an imagined prenational indigenous Kingdom of Quito, and a Mexican governor's palace became a Palace Museum and Space of Diversity. The reader is confronted with a variety of ways in which postcolonial subjectivity emerges out of the selective embrace of three very distinct (pre)colonial pasts. The lessons to be learned in these three sites are similar to the ones in previous sections: an honest appraisal of ongoing disenfranchisement of indigenous or marginal peoples is sacrificed to a noncontroversial "we all get along" storyline.

The final section of the book, somewhat ambiguously titled “Under-States Stories,” deals with questions of heritage. International actors, often the United Nations in collaboration with postcolonial national elites, write world heritage registers and decide which locales are globally memorable and which ones are not. These politically motivated decisions are often met with local opposition or subversion as the examples of two monuments in Nepal and a museum and street festival in Cuba show. In Brazil, it is the state that creates heritage, turning a notorious favela into “a cradle of samba.” In Brazil and Cuba, heritage functions to turn poor and disenfranchised communities of color into national symbols that can be commodified, which releases the state from the responsibility to implement structural reforms that would actually eradicate poverty, crime, and drug trafficking. In the final chapter of the collection, readers learn of the installation of two plaques commemorating Caribbean freedom fighters against French colonial rule among the otherwise white bodies of French Republican heroes in the Pantheon (the actual remains of the fighters could not be transferred because nobody knows where they are buried). This chapter could have easily been presented in the second section of the book, as it shows how the imperial center tries to acknowledge, if not quite come to terms with, its colonial past.

Although both uneven in terms of geographic distribution and the genre of memory locales (the majority of the included sites are museums), the edited collection contains nuanced and detailed discussions of the role of public commemorative spaces in generating national sentiments among the audiences they address. Many of the articles illustrate that public memory projects come at the expense of disenfranchised communities of color who are supposed to legitimize the nation-state in symbolic form, without obtaining economic and social justice. The articles should make the reader a more critical consumer of heritage, history, and memory sites.

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**Democracy: Anthropological Approaches.** *Julia Paley*. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2008. 286 pp.

### JEFFREY WITSOE

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How should anthropologists approach the study of *democracy*, that increasingly ubiquitous and yet widely misused term? This excellent volume emerged from an advanced

seminar on democracy at the School for Advanced Research in Santa Fe that explored this question. This is a timely endeavor. An increasing number of countries claim to be democracies, even as global power shifts away from the so-called “established democracies” in the West, and new forms of democratic experience are emerging. Understanding and theorizing the contemporary diversity of democratic experience is becoming an increasingly urgent task. Yet, as editor Julia Paley (2002) notes in an earlier article, while anthropologists regularly encounter democracy—as sets of ideas and practices—in the course of their fieldwork, there has been relatively little explicit anthropological research or theorizing on democracy. This collection moves us a step further in developing an anthropological approach to the study of democracy.

In the introduction to the volume, Paley skillfully brings together insights from the chapters in thinking broadly about what an anthropological approach to democracy should entail. The basic assertion that runs through the volume is a refusal to buy into the standard model of liberal democracy, “relinquishing preconceived notions of what democracy is or should be” (p. 4), and a critical rethinking of the ways in which democracy plays out within various contexts. Instead of attempting to define *democracy*, or measure the extent to which a given country is genuinely “democratic,” the book argues that anthropologists should explore the ways in which democracy actually plays out in practice, the meanings that come to be attached to the term, and the political subjectivities that result, demonstrating the value of ethnography and anthropological analysis in opening up new ways of looking at democracy. She sums up the two main projects that guide subsequent chapters:

First, detecting the many variations associated with the term *democracy* in a broad array of contexts and, second, understanding the ways in which democracy has been conceptualized in public discourse and practice—both the *logic* underlying the idea that democracy is definable by discreet features and infinitely replicable and the *process* through which this notion of democracy has been generated and come to predominate. [p. 5]

These turn out to be rather different projects, one exploring the ways in which democratic experience diverges from the liberal democratic normative standard (what Nugent refers to as “normative democracy”), and the other examining the process through which this normative standard is produced as a “globally circulating discourse” that is drawn from and strategically deployed in specific contexts. This also highlights the diversity of peoples’ encounters with democracy recounted in the chapters, including rejection and critique (West), reconstitution (Nugent), popular embrace (Banerjee), promotion (Coles), attempts to strengthen (Paley and Schirmer), and manipulation (Gupta

and Greenhouse). There is also a variety of methodological approaches, for instance, focusing on elections (Banerjee and Coles), comparative political history (Nugent), and discourse (Greenhouse).

As the guiding theme of the volume is to destabilize prevailing notions of democracy and explore new perspectives, each chapter asks a rather different question that emerges from their respective sites, resulting in a rich and varied collection. David Nugent asks how particular histories of state formation shape the experience of democracy, leading him to posit the emergence of an “alternate democracy” in the northern Peruvian Andes. Mukulika Banerjee revisits the old question of why people vote, going beyond the standard rational choice or functionalist explanations to show the ways in which the “sacred” election ritual in rural West Bengal reflects the complexity of the everyday “micropolitics” of the village, with thousands of very different individual stories converging on election day. Harry West examines how democratic reforms conflict with other “languages of power” in Mozambique, resulting in democracy being interpreted in unexpected ways, such as reflecting a tolerance of sorcery (even the practice of “government sorcery”) or abandonment of the people by elites no longer willing to act as socialist-era patrons. Kimberly Coles explores the role of international election monitors who don’t really do much, and finds that what she calls “passive presence”—the act of just being there—has its own effects on democracy promotion. Julia Paley asks whether social movements remain important once participatory democratic projects (the UNORCAC in Ecuador) have been achieved and argues that continued pressure is necessary to ensure accountability. Akhil Gupta examines the relationship between literacy and democracy in India, finding that, while the written word does enable distinct forms of bureaucratic dominance, subaltern rural people were able to find spaces of maneuver through popular political participation and, if all else failed, counterfeiting. Carol Greenhouse examines the “fractured discourse” in the United States that led to the invasion of Iraq as “war proponents’ agility in fracturing the discourse of their opposition” (p. 202) subverted democracy by rendering “opposition moot (but not mute).” Lastly, Jennifer Schirmer provides an account of how dialogue between groups engaged in armed conflict in Columbia facilitated a deliberative process that she argues is capable of transforming both sides.

Of course there are many other questions that could be asked, including what the diversity of democratic experiences documented in the volume mean, not just for critiquing liberal democracy, but also for the viability of popular alternatives such as “deliberative democracy” and various conceptions of “radical democracy” (e.g., Hardt and Negri 2004). We might also ask whether “alternative democracies” that are emerging might eventually pose a challenge to the liberal democratic standard, pointing the

way toward novel political futures. This exciting volume represents an important step toward developing what the contributors agree is a “still emerging field.”

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**Cultures of Servitude: Modernity, Domesticity, and Class in India.** *Raka Ray and Seemin Quyum*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. 272 pp.

## MARY ROMERO

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Over the last decade, globalization and the impact of transnational care work on both receiving and sending countries has broadened conceptualizations of contemporary domestic service. In their ethnography of domestic servitude in Kolkata, India, and New York City, Raka Ray and Seemin Quyum remind us that recent research has been dominated by Western forms of the occupation that assume a relationship between middle-class women’s labor-force participation and tend to ignore historical and colonial roots of master and slave; consequently, changing conceptions of domesticity, class, and modernity have been less apparent. Focusing on employers and servants from the same culture illustrates the constitution of classes and the adaptation of traditional servitude among a “modern” Indian elite in which the significance of the work has helped maintain middle-class status and reproduce inequality. Recognizing the intrinsic inequality in employer–servant relationships, Ray and Quyum explore power relationships of domination–subordination and dependency as a culture of servitude. Under feudalism, social relations were based on loyalty and obligation typically involving male family retainers working in large homes. However, social relations between employer and servant are now contractual—involving women working full or part time and living away from their employer’s flat or apartment. At the same time, employers engage in both feudal and modern management styles. Ray and Quyum further examine Kolkata’s culture of servitude in transnational context—analyzing employers and their domestic workers and nannies in New York City.

Calling researchers’ attention to the cultural specificity of employer–servant relations, Ray and Quyum demonstrate the importance of understanding feudal households and joint families in comprehending the deeply

embedded legacy and understanding servants' work and identity. Four types of servants coexist: (1) the traditional "family retainer," that is, individuals or families that remain with an employer for generations and are usually men; (2) live-in servants; (3) full-time servants who live in their own homes; and (4) part-time servants who work for several families each day. Like other domestic workers, servants employed by several families are more independent and are least likely to feel obligated and loyal. Servants are also subjected to exploitation under the guise of "being one of the family," which Ray and Quyum refer to as the "rhetoric of love." The significance of the "rhetoric of love" among employers and servants is influenced by type of working arrangement, degree of childcare involved, and the age and gender of employers.

However, both servants referred to as family and those considered contract workers experienced the extreme inequality of social relationships and interactions, which were used to maintain class distinctions. Similar practices used to separate servants from family members, that have been cited in other studies, were also discussed. Servants were expected to be invisible and observe the privacy of the employer and family. Daily activity was arranged to maintain physical and emotional distance. Specific areas of the house were relegated as servant quarters. Both space and interaction were used to segregate eating, sitting, sleeping, bathing, and appearance.

The inclusion of employers and servants in the contemporary United States facilitated comparison with the transnational context of Kolkata's culture of servitude. Conditions in New York City presented new meanings of personal service in employers' homes, that incorporated the rights and characteristics of domestic and care work. Interviews with employers revealed competing attitudes about contractual and impersonal relations with workers and how they reestablished traditional forms of relations. Importation of the culture of servitude suggests employers' overwhelming acceptance that servants are essential for maintaining a household; differing levels of the "rhetoric of love" were used to discuss servants and how employers held on to daily and spatial practices that reproduce class distinctions and in some cases immigrant status.

One of the most insightful discussions in the book is the relationship between the culture of servitude and patriarchal hierarchies. The transition from male servants to female servants within a patriarchal society resulted in women having to assume financial responsibility for their households. Women's narratives generated stories of the "failure of patriarchy," which resulted when fathers, husbands, and brothers proved unable to provide for their families. Consequently, women were forced into servant positions. Rather than espousing Western feminist notions equating paid work with female independence, they further embraced the ideal situation of women being taken care

of by their husbands. This failure of patriarchy was not only a painful reality for women but also one that male servants carried as internalized feelings of shame and regret that their wives had to seek paid work. Both parents held on to the wish that their children would escape the same circumstances.

Although Ray and Quyum make a strong argument that Kolkata's culture of servitude isolates paid domestic labor and care work from other labor among the middle class in India and Bengali employers in New York, their opposition to the position that domestic service in the United States needs to be analyzed within the context of capitalism and their insistence that servitude and paternalism are exploitative characteristics within feudalism is less convincing. Servitude and paternalism are not unknown characteristics of other low-wage jobs in the United States. As in all labor relations, gender, race, class, and citizenship influence working conditions. There are many ways for families to address needed care work and other household labor needs. The options for paying for this labor appear in a wide range of forms, from cleaning agencies to hiring full- and part-time day workers or contracting live-in workers. Many of these arrangements are shaped by the lack of federal labor legislation and immigration policies. Although workers may be laboring outside public gaze, they have a long history of organizing efforts. Occupations dominated by immigrants, including undocumented workers, have not always found traditional unions to be the best strategy for change. However, over the last decade numerous organizations have emerged. A prime mover in this effort is the National Domestic Workers Alliance in New York City. Many aspects of the culture of servitude are addressed in the Alliance's organizing efforts and campaigns. As unions move toward international organizing, the culture of servitude may find new forces of opposition.

Ray and Quyum's work makes an important contribution in furthering our understanding of working relationships behind closed doors, the role that domestic service holds in reproducing gender and class, and differences between cultures in the meaning and identity of employers and servants.

**Households and Hegemony: Early Creek Prestige Goods, Symbolic Capital, and Social Power.** *Cameron B. Wesson.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. xii + 228 pp.

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Over the past decade or so, scholars have been attempting to explicate the forces that transformed the 16th-century Mississippian world of the American Indians into the

18th-century colonial world of Indians, Europeans, and Africans. The European invasion, of course, stands at the top of the list of these forces for change, and rightly so because this invasion was certainly a foundational event for all involved. Introduced diseases were early on thought to constitute the primary cause for the transformation of the Mississippian world. However, more recent scholarly scrutiny of the invasion has led to more nuanced, finer understandings of not only the effects of disease but also of other sorts of disruptions, opportunities, and changes in Indian life that occurred once their lives became intertwined with that of Europeans and Africans. Wesson's book, *Households and Hegemony*, adds an important element to these discussions through his close look at how hierarchal leadership persisted into the late 17th and early 18th centuries among the groups that came to be known as the Creeks, only to be gradually transformed not by European machinations but, instead, by the internal political dynamics and social competition of the coalescent Creek Indians that played out over 200 years.

In his introduction, Wesson sets up his argument with a mixed set of theoretical takes. He calls on the Annales School of social history, agency theory, Bourdieu's habitus and practice theory, Gramsci's hegemony and Comaroff and Comaroff's negotiation, and, later, Foucault's emplacement and heterotopia. In a nutshell, Wesson ties the *événement* (or short-term event) of the Annales school to agency theory in that individuals create events, and, thus, by studying events one can study how individual actions shape history and societies. He uses habitus to stress that sometimes change occurs ever so slowly as one's habitus is modified, bit by bit, by one's own actions and ideas. He also understands much change to be initiated at the ideological level through a manipulation of symbols. And, finally, he sees the top-down, elite hegemony of the Mississippian world as providing a context for habitus and agency and as an order (symbolic and otherwise) against which individuals found new ways to strain or with which to negotiate. In the process, the old hegemony gave way to a new hegemony. Wesson then proposes the household as the most appropriate unit of analysis for such a study because households are the archaeological footprints of individuals, and, thus, a household analysis centers the individual (agency).

Wesson steadily directs the discussion into the prestige-goods exchange system that underwrote Mississippian power and hierarchy. Here Wesson highlights his good understanding of social theory by aptly utilizing Bourdieu's social capital theories to frame and think about this precontact exchange system, which allows Wesson to talk about how a symbolic system can be challenged and renegotiated. Wesson segues into his discussion on the town and household as sociograms, once again understanding the town and the household

to be symbols that can be manipulated, negotiated, and, ultimately, changed not only by elites but also by the rank and file as well. After a more satisfying history chapter summarizing the first 200 years of Creek and European contact, Wesson moves into presenting the archaeological data.

Drawing on his own fieldwork and data from archaeological sites excavated by others, Wesson presents a convincing case that the prestige-goods economy of the early Creeks shifted from a system of elite-centered, prestige-good system; to one in which the elites seem to have been under duress to control the influx of new prestige items through the European trade and did so by hoarding them; to one in which more and more people had access to these goods, thereby challenging elite authority and prestige. Wesson corroborates this interpretation with an interesting examination of household storage facilities. His argument is that as elite power, which included keeping granaries, waned, one finds more storage facilities associated with rank-and-file households because storage would have moved from an elite obligation to an everyday concern for the commoner. He also sees a concomitant reduction in household sizes and a decline in the use of winter houses, both of which indicate, according to Wesson, a reduction in the size of the household and perhaps a restructuring of the domestic economy as well. His conclusion is that in the transformation of the Mississippian world that occurred with European contact, the changes in leadership were largely an indigenous, internal reordering in the face of the new opportunities afforded both the Creek elites and the rank and file. In this reordering, the 16th-century elite power based on ascribed hierarchy becomes challenged by secondary elites and others as prestige goods become more accessible to more people during the 17th and early 18th centuries, resulting in an effort by the elites to keep control of their power, only to eventually lose their grip on it by the mid-18th century.

I suspect archaeologists will find reasons to quibble with Wesson's archaeological data, and even Wesson admits that sometimes it is thin. And how important the exchange and flow of prestige goods was to the Mississippian political economy is still under debate. Generally speaking, though, Wesson's argument is a good one. The vestiges of ascribed power are not hard to see in the 18th- and even 19th-century documents, and Wesson gives us a way to think about how, why, and when that power changed between the 16th and 18th centuries. Wesson also reminds us that change comes from both within and without. There can be little doubt that the forces for change with the European invasion were many and varying, and that Native peoples responded in as many and varied ways. That the 18th-century colonial world was far different from the 16th-century Mississippian world is clear by now, and Wesson's smart book is one more step toward a truer understanding

of how the transformation of the Mississippian world unfolded over more than two centuries.

**In the Presence of Sai Baba: Body, City, and Memory in a Global Religious Movement.** *Smriti Srinivas*. Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2008. 403 pp.

**JOSEPH S. ALTER**

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On the stage of contemporary Indian spirituality, there are few figures more recognizable than Sathya Sai Baba, a popular, modern guru with a distinctive halo of frizzy hair, and Shirdi Sai Baba, a bhakti-sufi saint at the turn of the 21st century from rural Maharashtra. Many devotees of the modern guru, who is at the center of a global religious movement based in South India, claim that he is the incarnation of the historical saint from Shirdi.

Building on her record of rich, sensitive, and creatively interdisciplinary research, Smriti Srinivas has produced an insightful interpretation and analysis of the Sai Baba movement, with a primary focus on the “sensibility of devotion.” The study is structured thematically around the interplay of four urban, cultural landscapes: the hermitage of Sathya Sai Baba at Puttaparthi-Prashanti Nilayam, and three Sai Organization centers in different parts of the world—Bangalore, Nairobi, and Atlanta. The urban matrix of this global religious movement is further analyzed with reference to the interplay of sensory affect, somatic practices, social service transaction, and the play of memory and history.

One of the many interesting features of religious life explored in this study is how incarnation shapes culture, memory, and history in practice. Memory is powerful precisely because it invokes the past into the present in ways that produce meaning in relation to history. Within this nexus of memory and history—especially one that intimately connects two saints—incarnation produces a kind of devotion that transcends time, space and community. By analyzing the confluence of memory, bodies, and space in relation to powerful articulations of religious belief, Srinivas not only provides a rich ethnographic account of devotional institutions and practices but she also provides a commentary on the larger structure of religion and modernity. Globalization and transnational urban landscapes are incarnations of national and transnational liberal discourses, and by situating the Sai Baba movement in the nexus of various discursive spaces she provides a critical commentary on those highly visible forms of religion that fracture along the lines of secularism, fundamentalism, nationalism, and antimodern nostalgia. Set against a backdrop of Hindu revivalism in other, starkly partitioned, and violent urban spaces, Srinivas characterizes her study as an experiment

in the “mnemonics of an alternative urban modernity” (pp. 6–7).

A number of specific analytical procedures and methodological strategies contribute to making this a most successful and enlightening experiment. One has to do with a direct engagement with the problem of credibility in relation to ethnographic perspectivity, as perspectivity is a function of empathic detachment. Srinivas’s anthropological insight stems from her ability to translate the experiential sense of miraculous presence articulated by Sai Baba devotees into the terms of a sociosensory reality that they hope to inhabit. Thus, she avoids the problem of trying to locate the truth of the matter in miracles as miracles by taking to heart the cultural logic of incarnation: belief in miracles and the presence inspired by the experience of belief is about the hope of remaking the world.

Although some may find it difficult to intuitively grasp the structure of an analysis that sweeps between the intimately sensory and the warp and woof of transnational, urban disarticulation, the structure of the book is systematic, clear, and theoretically coherent.

Following a brief chapter that charts the historical transformation of Shirdi Sai Baba from eccentric rural ascetic to a charismatic middle-class guru, Srinivas shifts to the incarnation of memory in the person of Satya Sai Baba as a global avatar of Shiva-Shakti who embodies truth and love. The third chapter engages directly with the visceral nature of sensory memory in physiological acts of devotion, *darshan* (visual presence with god), recitation, and touch. As the central substantive chapter of the book, chapter 4 reflects the larger structure of the study, bringing the intimacy of direct experience in embodied acts of healing and service together with a clear and concise discussion of the congregational format and institutional structure of the vast—and extremely wealthy—Sai Organization, as it sponsors and coordinates charitable, educational, and public health work performed by devotees as extended acts of devotional service.

The second half of the book begins with a chapter detailing the construction and devotional habitation of Prashanti Nilayam. Srinivas characterizes Prashanti Nilayam as an “ideal polis,” weaving together a critical understanding of localized modernity, urban planning, architectural design, and sculpture to show how a visionary perspective on spirituality takes shape on the ground. Whereas Prashanti Nilayam is an encompassing vision of truth incarnate, the chapters that follow trace out the different ways that rhetoric, congregational rituals, and service in regional Sai Centers intersect with the various cityscapes in which they are located: in Bangalore the charismatic guru, Shirdi Sai Baba, is enshrined in space and practice, bringing the essence of rural imaginings into the center of a globally networked city; in Nairobi regimens of congregational

worship and devotional service are enacted through regimens of embodied sacrality. The final substantive chapter in the book reflects Srinivas's central concern with globalization and embodiment. Her analysis locates the Sai Movement in the experience of devotees in Atlanta, focusing on the social dynamics that produce an intersection of embodied experience, the language of devotion and sociality in the very heart of the Bible Belt.

*In the Presence of Sai Baba* is a rich, textured, and insightful book on many different levels. Deeply sensitive to the subjectivity of devotee experience, Srinivas nevertheless steps back from the brink of descriptive empathy to provide the reader with an incisive, multidisciplinary analytical perspective on the dynamics of belief, embodiment, and globalization.

**Shamans, Nostalgias, and the IMF: South Korean Popular Religion in Motion.** *Laurel Kendall.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009. xxviii + 251 pp.

#### SAMUEL GERALD COLLINS

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Laurel Kendall's *Shamans, Nostalgias, and the IMF* engages the Korean modern across three decades of tumultuous change. One of the preeminent anthropologists writing in English about Korea today, Kendall's work combines rich, ethnographic description with strong theoretical insights: a testament to the power of long-term fieldwork. People familiar with her writing will recognize appearances from her original informants (Yongsu's Mother), now older, wiser, and occasionally given to nostalgic reverie. But Yongsu's Mother isn't the only one: one of the spirits Kendall conjures here is that of her past self, the self that identified the rural with the culturally authentic when she first went into the field in the 1970s. But her goal is not to exorcise these spirits; indeed, the *kut* at the (ritual) center of Korean shamanism involves not so much an exorcism (to which it is usually compared) as an understanding reached with ancestors and spirits.

In the opening vignette, Yongsu's Mother complains that the breakneck pace of Korean development has encroached on the heretofore isolated mountain spirits (*sansin*)—the typical story of modernization and lost tradition, but with a twist. Crowded off the mountains, "don't the gods just descend into human beings? . . . In the past, if you wanted to seek out a shaman, then you would have to walk twenty *ri*, thirty *ri*, not nowadays, here's one, and there's one, and there's another one. They're everywhere" (p. xviii). Disenchantment and modernity, perhaps, but with an altogether different outcome than Weber's iron cage. This sets the tone for the remaining chapters, each of which starts down the teleological path of Weberian ra-

tionalization before veering off along emergent, shamanic paths that transect and interrogate the present.

Kendall begins with reflections on her early fieldwork in "Enduring Pine Village," contrasting a "crazy *kut*" (*michin kut*) she attended from that time to a ritual at a commercial shrine (*kuttang*) in suburban Seoul in the early 1990s. The difference between that early *kut*, redolent of rural poverty and extended kinship, and the later one, held where shamans can rent space for their rituals, raises questions of authenticity, change, and the ultimate fate of Korea's indigenous religious belief.

Subsequent chapters consider the idea of authenticity with regard to the shaman herself (*mansin* or *mudang*). Of course, separating the "real" from the "fake" shamans may not be the best question to ask: the "authentic" *mansin* combines performance with the genius of inspiration or, rather, uses one to enable the other, "performing mimetic acts that satisfy both humans and spirits, doing so when even inspiration eludes them" (p. 112). As Kendall turns to the shaman's training (re)organized with shaman schools, commercially available recordings and attenuated apprenticeships, the "phony" and "real" emerge as unstable, chiasmic terms that explore the limits of the modern. Yet there is little doubt that change has come: where people once held *kut* for illness, today they come to Seoul's *kuttang* for *chaesu kut*—for good luck for their businesses. And with these rituals come gods and supernatural officials more suited to the hectic pace of Korean capitalism: commerce official, official of the restaurant counter. Of course, these seem ironically distant from the household gods and Confucian officials that populated *kut* in Korea's agrarian past. But do people really experience them as a contradiction?

In a sense, shamans don't feel this as contradictory at all because the ancestors and spirits with which they communicate are contemporary. However, everyone feels this contradiction—for that is the contradiction of capitalism itself. That is, Korean shamanism partakes of the same contradictory spirits that drive Korean development—the insatiability of desire and the lure of the new, amid a persistent past. It's the contradictions of capitalism—the knowledge that "all that is solid melts into air" in a society that remains self-consciously conservative.

It is fitting that Kendall returns at the end of this volume to the sites most associated with shamanic power: sacred mountains that map the *mansin's* practice onto places of geomantic significance: Kam'ak Mountain, Inuang Mountain, Paektu Mountain. The chapter begins with Kendall and her research assistant climbing a hill in search of a neighborhood shrine. They find it in all its deteriorated glory and talk to the aged shrine keeper, a bulwark against the materialist tide. Four years later, Kendall and Ms. Kim set out again—but now the shrine is gone, replaced by a contemporary home where the shrine keeper can continue her work without the discomforts of the old building. They

feel let down. But who's letting down whom here? The question sets her off on a series of metonymic encounters in shrines and on mountaintops, with shamans who belt out karaoke standards on the way home from their kut, and to kuttang with parking lots and air conditioning. In the face of commercialization and prey to multiple (and occasionally hackneyed) development schemes, how can shamanism survive?

But it does, riding on the back of a destructive capitalism that has touched every corner of Korean society. In the end, Kendall comes to an understanding of this "unruly spirit" (p. 198) of Korean shamanism, the one that might lay claim to 5,000 years of tradition while still participating in the creative destruction of capitalism. In her introduction, Kendall asks us to imagine the doors of a shrine painted with *t'aeguk*, "three comma-shaped swirls of primary colors—red, yellow and blue—waxing and waning against each other as they combine to make a circle. Imagine 'superstition,' 'culture,' and 'religion' as the loci of ideas, attitudes, and social practices that wax and wane within the circle of Korean modernity where shamans dance" (p. 1). That is, this isn't Korean shamanism as a "religion" (*mugyo*) or as a "cultural treasure" (*munhwa*), but as a very much contemporary form that, like modernity itself, is enigmatic, emergent, unpredictable.

**Gender Pluralism: Southeast Asia since Early Modern Times.** Michael Peletz. New York: Routledge, 2009. ix + 339 pp.

#### EVELYN BLACKWOOD

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The broad sweep of Michael Peletz's *Gender Pluralism* offers much food for thought, covering 600 years of Southeast Asian history in an account of the intersections of gender pluralism with religious, economic, and political transformations. He does a wonderful job of bringing together hard-to-find material on ritual transvestism, transgenderism, and alternative sexualities to develop a valuable history of Southeast Asian *gender pluralism*, a term he uses to encompass the diverse forms of legitimate or accepted genders, sexualities, and sexual practices in Southeast Asia historically. In the first part of the book Peletz establishes the terms of that gender pluralism during the early modern period. He then offers a provocative and sweeping analysis of the delegitimation and constriction of gender pluralism over time in Southeast Asia. His focus on the histories of transgendered people offers a powerful lens to view the processes at work.

Peletz provides an extensive analysis of the relationship of colonialism, religious transformations, capitalist markets, expanding state powers, and urbanization to transfor-

mations in gender pluralism. He makes a strong case for the long and varied processes of delegitimation, pointing to ongoing shifts in beliefs and practices surrounding gender, personhood, cosmology, and sexuality. Extending to the turn of the 21st century, this is a complex and dynamic history of gender pluralism, not for the impatient or those who want easy answers. Its overall framework has obvious application beyond Southeast Asia.

Peletz makes an intriguing case for gender pluralism, which he uses as a rough measurement to track the changing fortunes of, among other things, women's autonomy and social control, ritual transvestism, same-sex sexualities, men or women acting like the other sex (gender transgression or transgendered individuals), prostitution, and temporary marriage. In fact, Peletz uses gender pluralism to include all legitimate practices of a gender or sexual nature, with an overriding interest in those practices that are considered nonlegitimate in a Western or European sense.

The beginning of the book details the forms of legitimate gender and sexual practices in the early modern period (roughly the 15th and 16th centuries). Recognizing the artificiality of any starting point or geographically circumscribed history, Peletz ranges even farther back in time to take into account Hindu and Buddhist mythologies and the influence of Indianized or Indic states on Southeast Asia. According to Peletz, these earlier influences give rise to cosmologies and ritual practices that incorporate and value the practice of ritual transvestism. As in all the chapters, Peletz offers detailed and careful analysis of texts to make statements about the legitimacy or devaluation of such practices.

From this starting point Peletz lays out the processes by which gender pluralism constricted, pointing to intensified commerce, state building, the increasing dominance of world religions, and colonialism. The constriction of gender pluralism is unevenly manifested, however, leading Peletz to propose that stigmatizing processes are not everywhere the same. Peletz is always careful to note that shifts in gender pluralism were variable in intensity and duration, occasioned by a variety of historically, politically, and culturally specific processes. He finds particularly compelling, the association of the marginalization and devaluation of women with the constriction of gender pluralism and the rejection of transgender ritual specialists. In some cases where gender pluralism persists, Peletz attributes it to myth, ritual, and cosmologies resistant to political and religious processes of modernization. His analysis is at its best when addressing the Malaysian context, in which Peletz's own long-term field expertise provides a strong background for a clear, nuanced reading of the processes up to the turn of the 21st century.

Among many intriguing points in the book, I want to mention a couple here. Peletz brings to life a fascinating contradiction between the constriction of gender pluralism

and a proliferation of diversity outside of normative categories (because of crises of government, global economics, and fragmentation of authority under state modernity). Peletz also reveals the connection between instability in times of rapid change and targeting of deviant sexualities. His discussion of gay activist organizations and history in Malaysia raises an important distinction between national level analyses of state policies and ground-level, actor-oriented views. Some of his analysis of contemporary activist strategies and discourse, however, would have benefitted from greater engagement with the literature on Indonesia or Thailand.

Any comparative work of this magnitude will have certain weaknesses. A book that begins with ritual transvestites in early modern times and ends with gay activists at the turn of the 21st century might lead one to conclude erroneously that current expressions of gender transgression are historical transformations of ritual transvestism, in effect positing the continuity of an essentialized transgenderism. Elliston's (1999) discussion of Tahiti's gender transgressors demonstrates the recent origins of several transgender categories as a result of French colonial activities. Using the concept of gender pluralism enables Peletz to focus on social categories, rather than individual behaviors, thus avoiding essentializing claims about deep-rooted gender and sexual practices. The diversity of practices included under gender (and sexual) pluralism, however, makes it at the same time a somewhat unwieldy category that resists fine-tuned analysis. Thus, the scale of this work and the wide-ranging material presented allow for only the most general conclusions.

Lacunae are to be expected in such a work but having committed to a tour-de-force of Southeast Asia, Peletz could have usefully situated his discussion of transgender practices within the larger literature addressing female masculinities in Southeast Asia. Further attention to the particular gendered differences attending male and female bodies would have also provided more incisive reading of the processes of change. For instance, although Peletz makes a strong connection between the marginalization of women and the delegitimation of ritual transvestism, it is not clear how that process applies to male-bodied ritual transvestites practicing today in Malaysia, South Sulawesi, and Burma. In this context the term *delegitimation* needs to be more finely calibrated.

These exceptions aside, the book is compelling, establishing an innovative historical framework that will produce many new questions and avenues of research. The book does much more than simply track processes of change over time; it demonstrates the fluidity of social categories. Peletz's analysis dramatically reveals how categories of gender and sexuality expand and contract over time, as older meanings are left aside and new ones incorporated in complex interaction with global processes.

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**Red Lights: The Lives of Sex Workers in Postsocialist China.** *Tiantian Zheng*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009. 293 pp.

## ELANAH URETSKY

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The karaoke bar has become a ubiquitous symbol of urban China that is often taken to represent evidence of globalization, corruption, and sexuality. Tiantian Zheng's book *Red Lights: The Lives of Sex Workers in Postsocialist China* finally helps the karaoke bar and its occupants come alive. Zheng returned to her hometown of Dalian, a port city in northeastern China formerly governed under Japanese colonial rule, to conduct this institutional ethnography of the karaoke bar. Indeed, she lived with hostesses inside a karaoke bar, which resulted in a rich ethnographic experience that allows her to illustrate the true role of karaoke bars in post-Mao Chinese society as well as the roles and identities of the hostesses and clients who sustain its social position. The end product is a description of how the karaoke bar contributes to construction of a new form of entrepreneurial masculinity. In doing so Zheng demonstrates how the karaoke bar, which is antithetical to state ideals, sits at the nexus of masculinity, power, and sex work in a way that serves the goals of the state, wealthy entrepreneurs, and poor, rural migrant women.

Much of the story revolves around male and female resistance to dominant powers. In the 1930s Japanese powers tried to subjugate Chinese men in Dalian through a strict program of calisthenics. The response was the adoption of soccer as a way of establishing an enduring model of masculinity based on bodily resistance. Today, men claim their masculinity through resistance to the state. They have taken the personalization of the impersonal money transaction, necessary for sustaining a market economy under a socialist state, from the banquet hall into the karaoke bar where they use sex as a way to communicate with a previously emasculating state. Women, as Zheng shows, have not only resisted the powerful male agents who seek to control their bodies but have also taken advantage of these men to raise their own social status. In this way Zheng subverts the archetypical portrayal of sex worker as victim. In colonial Dalian, women utilized the All-Manchu

Women's Union Organization, an organization created to provide Japanese soldiers with the feminine and motherly warmth necessary for maintaining strong masculine will, to carve out a space for their own independence. Today, hostesses use their clients' social networks to enhance their own social status and economic security.

Although the title of the book suggests a discussion of women's lives, *Red Lights* focuses equally on men's and women's experiences in the karaoke bar. In fact, the first half of the book concentrates on the idea of entrepreneurial masculinity as a way of bringing readers through the establishment of the institution where female hostesses work.

The first chapter demonstrates how Japanese colonial rule helped to structure modern-day masculinity in Dalian. Zheng also describes the unique structure of prostitution in Dalian that was influenced by the Japanese system of comfort women. Chapter 2 introduces the reader to the structure and role of the karaoke bar in modern Dalian. Through her research Zheng discovered that the Japanese introduced the karaoke bar to Dalian as a way to open up the Chinese market. Chinese men adapted easily to this new brand of masculinity. Karaoke bars have subsequently been used by the state to stimulate local economy and promote foreign investment. They also represent an important means of supporting rural economies through financial remittances that hostesses send home. This is juxtaposed with the official forms of regulation that serve to suppress operation of the karaoke industry. Chapter 3 further focuses on the structure of the karaoke bar through a detailed description of the different tiers of bars. Here Zheng presents a hierarchical representation of high-, medium-, and low-tier bars as a way of signifying social stratification in post-Mao China. She illustrates that while the institutional organization and management as well as the clientele differ among these three levels, hostesses at all levels share very similar experiences. All are subject to similar violence and exploitation and they all develop similar types of networks to protect themselves against the inequities waged at a group that lives at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Her final discussion of men in chapter 4 focuses on the rise of the modern sexual Chinese man. This is where she demonstrates men's resistance against the state in post-Mao China. For a long time men were not in control of their sexual self because they were emasculated by a state that sought total control over private lives as a means of building loyalty toward the state. Women were robbed of their femininity and even masculinized as a way of oppressing sexuality. Men now want to be more in control of their sexuality, and Zheng argues they are using their newfound control of women as a medium for expressing their modern sense of masculinity.

In chapter 5, Zheng turns to the lives of the rural migrant women who work as the hostesses she lived with in Dalian. She begins by discussing the dual lives of hostesses

and the way they balance home (i.e., their rural hometown) and city to help them fulfill their filial obligations and maintain ties to their traditional kin network while living a successful urban lifestyle. Chapter 6 demonstrates how a hostess who lives at the margins of society, by virtue of her rural origins and chosen occupation, strives to achieve parity with her urban counterparts. Zheng describes how hostesses use the cultural symbols of consumption available to them through their occupational role, such as Western clothes, hairstyles, and skin tone to transform themselves from rural peasants to modern urbanites. Finally, in chapter 6 the reader learns about the multiple identities that hostesses must negotiate (from the unruly whore to the subservient woman to the archetypical damsel in distress) to attract clients. Assuming the right identity with particular clients provides these rural women, who start at the margins of society, with entrée into privileged social networks that grant access to the benefits of social capital, social advancement, and economic security.

Ethnographically, *Red Lights* is extremely rich and provides the reader with a lens into the karaoke bar that has previously not been available to outsiders. This intense focus on the karaoke bar, however, does limit the book's analysis of the "lived experiences" it aims to capture. Although the lives of the hostesses portrayed in the book were primarily focused inside the karaoke bar where they worked and lived for this period of their lives, the men discussed live their lives for the most part outside the karaoke bar. These men, who are often referred to as "clients," do not identify as such and their masculinity is most probably defined by events and activities that happen outside the karaoke bar. In addition, the rich ethnography can at times get in the way of critical analysis that would have helped to strengthen the book.

Overall, however, this is an extremely important addition to the literature on gender, sexuality, and transition in post-Mao China. The karaoke bar is integral to entrepreneurial success and economic development in China and an understanding of modern social and economic transformation is incomplete without knowledge of the role this institution serves in modern Chinese society.

**Cage of Freedom: Tamil Identity and the Ethnic Fetish in Malaysia.** Andrew Willford. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007. 364 pp.

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For anyone interested in how communal tensions play out over time in postcolonial societies one key issue is why they sometimes explode into spectacular interethnic violence while at other times—indeed, most of the time—they

do not. Many anthropologists, including Andrew Willford, sensibly presuppose in this regard a kind of transcendental Andersonian backdrop: nation-states, as it were, need to be imagined, but the tricky business of constructing a unifying image (or imaginary) out of the raw materials left behind by colonial racism, economic exploitation, and divide-to-rule governance generally involves marginalizing those groups who least fit the unifying national fiction, and rendering anxious and prickly those who do. In some countries, like Sri Lanka, this majority engendering process has led to civil war. In Malaysia, by contrast, and despite serious interethnic violence early in its postcolonial history, there have been 40 years of fairly consistent (if unevenly distributed) economic development and relative, interethnic peace, although at a cost. This is because the New Economic Policy (NEP) instituted there in 1971 by the ruling United Malays National Organization—partly in reaction to ethnic riots in 1969—somehow managed to smother interethnic dissent and construct a multiethnic hierarchy favoring *bumiputras* (Malays), politically and economically, all while co-opting and suppressing serious Chinese or Indian opposition. Yet the NEP, as Willford shows, was justified by an exclusionary ideology (and supporting state structures) that rejected “residual” elements of Hindu practice in local Malay religiosity, and defined Malaysia as, in essence, Malay, Islamic, and economically progressive, even as it denied the economy’s reliance on cheap Tamil and Malay labor. How could such an ideology and structure of calculated inequality not have engendered a violent response?

In this important work of theoretically sophisticated scholarship—one that combines political economy and Lacanian psychoanalysis in a potent mix—Willford focuses on how members of Malaysia’s largely Tamil, “Indian” minority community survived Malaysian nationalism by engaging in “dialectically” reactive ethnic assertions of their own—but, paradoxically, assertions that have inadvertently become for them a “cage of freedom” confining them within the very system they wish to repudiate or escape. It is, for Willford, precisely this dialectical mirror dance of self-defeating identity claims—with each ethnic group performing for the others in classic Barthesian fashion—that keeps Malaysia’s communal hierarchy running, although at the cost of a general Lacanian anxiety or “uncanniness” for all involved, including the Malays. This is the curious and interesting story Willford wants to tell. It is a tale of Duboisian “double-consciousness” writ systematically (although Willford ignores Du Bois’s useful analysis in favor of Lacan’s less elegant psychoanalytic language game when describing it) and, as a theoretical model, may well be as applicable as Willford believes beyond Malaysia’s unique circumstances. Time will tell.

In any case, Willford begins his case by laying out the structural position and internal divisions of Malaysia’s In-

dian community with great care. Compared to larger Malay and Chinese communities, Malaysia’s “Indians” officially comprise only 7.7 percent of its population and, thus, are both its smallest and most marginalized ethnic group. The bulk of this “Indian” population was brought to Malaysia during colonialism as a source of cheap labor for British rubber and palm oil plantations. Most were low caste Adiravidia (untouchable) Tamil laborers, although they were accompanied by a sprinkling of upper-caste foremen and managers. At the same time, the British also imported a number of upper-caste, English-educated people—mostly Tamils from Jaffna, “Ceylon” or other upper caste people from Karala—to work as low-level colonial bureaucrats. This group eventually became a small interlocutory class, favored by the colonial regime over Malays, Chinese, and plantation workers, a division in purpose and point of origin that soon became a distinction in social class and, eventually, in orientation toward the Malaysian state as well.

After the imposition of the NEP in 1971, working-class Tamils were increasingly forced off plantations and into the cities by modernization, there to become a much despised underclass blocked from economic mobility by their lack of access to both education and capital because of *bumiputra*-favoring state policies. Many, then, found their Tamil identity best asserted through ecstatic religious rituals such as *Thaipusam*, a celebration of the distinctively Dravidian god, *Murukan*. There, in sometimes painful displays of *bhakti* religiosity (piercing, hanging from hooks, dancing *kavadi*), individuals sought transcendence beyond (and in negation of) the state’s ethnic power hierarchy—Willford calls this their “fantasy”—even while displaying actions that confirmed for watching Malays (and middle-class Indians) the very stereotypes about “superstitious Hinduism” that were being used to justify Tamil’s position at the bottom of the system. At the same time, middle-class Indians, still mourning the loss of their colonial status, distanced themselves from working-class Tamils and their Dravidian religiosity, and constructed instead their own fantasy response to Malaysian nationalism: a properly “ecumenical” religiosity—one emphasizing a more intellectual Hinduism—designed to force Malays to admit or, somehow, reconnect with the prior involvement of Hinduism in their early Malaysian history. But here again, as with working-class attempts to transcend the system, middle-class assertions of Hindu superiority simply undermined themselves by presupposing a need for Malay recognition.

For Willford, there have been two key consequences of these fantasies of ethnic assertiveness: first, an estrangement between the two Indian classes that simply weakens their ability to respond politically as a group to the challenges of the Malaysian state; and, more centrally, a backhanded recognition of their own fragility of position in comparison to that of the Malays—a kind of uncanny

residual anxiety about themselves that Willford claims is an unconscious recognition of the “contingencies” of history and structural position that both undermine and force their defiant ethnic claims. For Willford, citing at once Marx, Freud, and Lacan, such ethnic assertions are best understood as “fetishes” in the sense that they are claims about ethnicity that deny the very preconditions that produce them. Such fetishistic ethnic assertions, then, paradoxically, hold Malaysia’s Indian Tamils ever more firmly in their place by confirming with their uncanniness the very hierarchy that they claim to be challenging. The kicker in all this, for Willford, is that the Malays too participate in, rely on, and secretly suffer the uncanny in this fantastic dialectic of anxious comparison.

What remains, then, is the scary impression that while Willford’s account of Malaysia as a working balance of anxious othering may well be true, it may also be more fragile and dangerous than anyone can reliably gauge. One also is left wondering what Malaysian Tamils themselves might make of Willford’s analysis—to say nothing of the Malaysian Chinese, who seem rather left out of these proceedings: would they find it insulting, amusing, liberating, a council of despair? Well, any great book leaves a backwash; it shall be interesting to see what is churned up by this one.

**Gaining Ground? “Rights” and “Property” in South African Land Reform.** *Deborah James.* New York: Routledge-Cavendish, 2007. 282 pp.

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Deborah James’s *Gaining Ground? “Rights” and “Property” in South African Land Reform* tackles the contradictions and complexities of land reform in the postapartheid era through extensive research into various government-sponsored projects in the province of Mpumalanga. James doesn’t shy away from narrating the shifts in policy and many critiques of the program as well as describing all the various actors involved in implementing and in benefiting from land reform. The strength of this book lies in its ability to portray complexity as well as the author’s clearly wide-ranging experience with land reform over more than a decade. At stake in land reform, James argues, are not only the material benefits given to those previously disadvantaged under apartheid but also the restoration of citizenship and potential for reconciliation through redress for past injustices. However, James also notes that given the constraints and current economic realities, the land reform program is both ambitious and unrealistic. Although unable to meet many of its goals, land reform has nonetheless provided “fertile grounds” for high aspirations of change on the part of many South Africans, what James refers to as

“millennial aspirations to redraw the map of South Africa” (p. 2).

From the ambitious claims of chiefs envisioning pre-colonial empires, to the descendants of the mission-educated elites who were removed from land they owned, to the labor tenants on white farms seeking security of tenure, land reform has to contend with a wide variety of different claimants and experiences of dispossession. To cope with this variety, policy was divided early on into three components: restitution, redistribution, and tenure reform. However, the claims made through the different programs have rarely fit neatly into the categories intended by the policymakers, as James shows through numerous examples. The restitution process, in particular, was intended for cases where clear evidence of dispossession after 1913 was available and could be settled by a Land Claims Court, but the historical reality of high levels of mobility creates the potential for multiple overlapping claims. James shows how the very promise of reform has reawakened desires for land, setting off cycles of visiting and tending graveyards and reworking historical narratives in ways that reinforce the desire for land through the very process of claiming it. Meanwhile, the government has found itself overwhelmed with more restitution claims than it can process.

One of the more fascinating accounts in the book is of a farm in Doornkop, which was handed over to its former occupants in the same year as the transition from apartheid. The government’s ability to settle this case quickly was primarily because of the heavy involvement of NGOs during the apartheid years in documenting this case. Although the claim was driven by the descendants of the mission-educated elites who were able to buy the farm in the early part of the 20th century, these same successful children were less likely to actually settle the land after it was restored as they had better living circumstances in urban areas. When the owners were dispossessed in 1974, there were many labor tenants who were also displaced and whose descendants desired to return to the land. This led to fierce debates over who was deserving of land—those whose rights were trampled on through an act of dispossession and who drew on biblical themes in narrating their return or the poorer former labor tenants from a different ethnic background who were more likely to have been impoverished by the dispossession in the 1970s.

One of the ironies of Doornkop is that in the decade following the transfer of ownership, multiple squatters have moved in—many of whom “bought” land from one of the owners—and the community has segmented into those who want to create a planned township-style settlement with the government providing services, and those who want to return to their original locations and engage in subsistence cultivation. These divisions over how to use or develop the land are also reflected in splits at the policy level that James illustrates through her use of the terms

*property* and *rights*. Government frustration over the failure of restitution farms to become viable commercial farms led to the appointment of a new minister in 1999 and a shift in the Department of Land Affairs toward an emphasis on property and development, rather than rights and citizenship. James gives more credit than most authors to the policy makers and implementers for recognizing the complications and contradictions inherent in their broad mandate to meet both the political and material goals of land reform in the face of very difficult constraints even as they make choices regarding how to handle cases of reform.

*Gaining Ground* also gives significant attention to the role of power brokers and the history of and current desire for paternalistic relationships in accessing land. James discusses the role of chiefs and the rise of other power brokers as intermediaries able to shape the process of reform and speak for communities of claimants from exploitative or sincere motives—or often some combination of both. She also argues that the expectations of many claimants for some form of paternal relationship—with white farmers, the state, or chiefs—needs to be understood as a realistic assessment of their need for “networks of dependence” (p. 14) as necessary to sustain livelihoods among the poor who rely on multiple strategies and incomes for survival.

As long as the many South Africans with aspirations to claim land continue to feel the disparity between their “grand-scale territorial ambitions” (p. 1), the slow pace of reform, and the difficulties in developing restored land, this reform process will remain a volatile and important issue. James’ book is essential reading for anyone interested in the transition from apartheid and is also recommended to those looking for case studies of land reform for comparative purposes. Finally, *Gaining Ground* is also a fascinating example of the blurred boundary between the state and civil society and has much to contribute to recent literature on the nature of the state.

**Crowning the Nice Girl.** *Christine R. Yano.* Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006. 294 pp.

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“‘Culture’ is a kimono worn as dress-up . . . the kimono references the wearer as a symbol of the Japanese American community in Hawai‘i” (pp. 206–207). Although significant changes have taken place in the Japanese American Cherry Blossom Festival Queen Pageant since 1953 when it began, Christine Yano argues that wearing the kimono remains the distinctive symbol of the pageant, serving as an index of a premodern Japan. She is the author of a study of gender and ethnicity in the Cherry Blossom Festival that features

a Queen pageant as its central event, and she emphasizes that contestants in the event are taught to wear a kimono.

The strength of the study rests on its framework: the intersection of the sponsoring organization—the Honolulu Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce (the Jaycees)—the Japanese American community, and significant social change and its impact on the Queen pageant. The author has concentrated her research on the policies and practices of the pageant as they evolved over time (“organizational stories”), reflecting global shifts and their effects locally, and noting specific generational differences in the Japanese American community. As she explains in the prologue, her *sansei* dreams were embedded within a geopolitical order: “the relationship between Japan and the United States, the place of Hawai‘i within the United States, the racial politics in Hawai‘i, and the role of women within the local Japanese American community” (p. 2). Presented in chapters arranged chronologically, the organizational stories documenting the community and the pageant are balanced by alternating chapters labeled “Herstories.” Based on the author’s interviews, these sketches of individual queens reveal changing experiences of and expectations for women in different decades, beginning with the queen from 1954 and concluding with queens in the 2000s.

The chronology begins with a focus on the Japanese community in postwar Hawai‘i and the founding of the Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1949 to enhance the opportunities and promote citizenship for young Nisei. The author also notes beauty contests of this era that she classifies as “rainbow pageants,” ones considered to be a display of the Pacific “melting pot” and the multiracial paradise, Hawai‘i. These did not survive past 1971, but the Cherry Blossom Queen pageant, organized to articulate Japanese American identity and promote citizenship continues today. The pageant is unusual in that it does not serve as a springboard to other pageants. The majority of the queens in the Cherry Blossom Festival initiated and completed their beauty contest career with this one pageant, indicating the close link between the contestants and the Japanese American community. The pageant sets itself apart also through its entrance requirement. From the time it was first organized until 1999 all of the contestants had to be 100 percent Japanese. When this rule was modified after years of discussion on the subject among the Jaycees (who do not require 100 percent Japanese identity for membership), the requirement was changed to 50 percent Japanese. Another distinctive feature of this contest is the relationship between the producers of the event and the contestants. As Yano points out, the Jaycees actually observe young women (with a gaze) and recruit them by inviting them to apply and by talking to their families. Moreover, the Jaycees then arrange for special clothes and services so that a family does not have to shoulder the costs. Although Yano provides data on this in different places in the study, it would have been

very useful to have a chapter devoted specifically to the Jaycees' role in recruitment and management. Mentioned occasionally is the role of the Jaycee wives who provide training, kimonos, and encouragement for the contestants.

In its insularity and male orchestration the Cherry Blossom Queen contest parallels a San Antonio, Texas, debutante ritual known as the Coronation, sponsored by a men's organization, the Order of the Alamo. Had the author been aware of Michaele Thurgood Haynes's study of the Coronation and its dresses, *Dressing Up Debutantes: Pageantry and Glitz in Texas* (1998), she could have benefited from comparing the dynamics of class in female coming-of-age rituals in modern societies. Haynes points to the requirement that the participants in this debutante ball and queen contest must be members of the Anglo aristocracy in San Antonio, which means that almost all of the "royal" debutantes are daughters of or related in some way to the male member of the Order of the Alamo and that they have "royal" genealogies. (The Coronation was begun in 1909.) Although the Cherry Blossom Queen contest originates from a specific ethnic-cultural group, and the Coronation is about lineage and class, Yano emphasizes that the Japanese American queen is expected to represent *ojosan* (the upper-class, refined young Japanese woman), and she describes the contestants of the 1950s and 1960s as quasidebutantes. In 1954, contestants were introduced at a Debutante Dance, and thousands attended. In the Coronation the queen of the debutantes is chosen on the basis of her lineage. In both events the contestants must appear in specific forms of dress that symbolize class and identity. In Hawai'i, the contestants must wear a kimono symbolizing Japan and a distant, different past. They are trained how to walk, sit, and stand properly in a kimono. In San Antonio the dresses of duchesses and queens are individually designed, and in 1998 such a dress could range in price from \$18,000 for a duchess and \$35,000 for a queen. Moreover, both rituals link the young women to a specific heritage through senior women who embody the desired characteristics. The Japanese American ritual extends to Japan for its heritage; arrangements are made for the queen to visit Japan and to have an audience with Empress Michiko. Yano describes her as the "archetypical *ojosan*" and the gendered class ideal, combining graciousness and elegance, humbleness, and wisdom. Several queens recalled the meeting with awe. In San Antonio, the young debutantes are the daughters, granddaughters, and great granddaughters of women who have participated in the Coronation for more than eight decades. Although produced by quite different cultures, both pageants reproduce exclusivity through gender and define the boundaries of class through the embodiment of the ideal woman and potential wife.

Although the study is rich in ethnographic material, it is unfortunate that the author never privileges us with a description of the actual pageant. Moreover, in spite

of the review-of-the-literature chapter as an introduction, the author fails to apply the relevant scholarship to her material. Sadly, she resorts to conversational language as a substitute for scholarly analysis. Consequently, she claims in her prologue and conclusion that the pageant is about "framing issues of race, ethnicity, spectacle, and community within the intertwined themes of niceness, and banality" (p. 12). This disappointing conclusion ignores the riches of her data. For example, the teacher of two cultural classes for the pageant, a mainstay of the festival, says that she enjoys watching the transformation the contestants undergo. Yano describes the training process, a classic description of rites of passage, in the final chapter, yet she fails to recognize the theoretical perspective that would have allowed her to see the pageant as the ritual that transforms the young women into candidates for wives for the upper-class or rising-upper-class men. Nor does she apply other scholarly perspectives from her literature chapter such as the display of the body, distinctions between local and pyramidal competitions, the power of men who wield control, the effects of the beauty industry, and others, any one of which would have made the study a significant contribution. Nevertheless, the data is rich, and it provides important insights into the processes by which a specific ethnic group establishes itself and adapts to a larger society through the performance of a festival featuring the ritual of a female beauty contest and to the dynamics of class and male control.

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**Heads of State: Icons, Power, and Politics in the Ancient and Modern Andes.** Denise Y. Arnold and Christine A. Hastorf. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008. 293 pp.

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*Heads of State* is an ambitious book that nicely demonstrates the values of holistic anthropology, area studies, and collaborative scholarship. The authors synthesize an impressive array of data to argue that Andean practices related to the taking, curation, and exchange of heads (and objects that stand in for heads) must be understood not just as religious activities but also as practices with strong political and economic dimensions. To support this, they bring together ethnographic and archaeological data from the South American Andes, bolstered by broader comparative discussion of relevant literature from other regions, all grounded in anthropological theories of exchange and political dynamics.

Denise Arnold and Christine Hastorf draw on a rich body of ethnographic and ethnohistoric research in *ayllu* Qaqachaka, Bolivia, complemented with data from elsewhere in the Andes and the Amazon, to argue that traditional practices of head taking took on added significance when the Inka conquered this region late in the Precolumbian Era and began to use local warriors to defend the imperial frontier. Head taking by male warriors was important in the *ayllu*, but they show that this practice can only be fully understood in light of the necessary and complementary practices of processing and curating heads undertaken by the *ayllu*'s women. Through their activities, captured trophy heads were symbolically converted into kinspeople. This in turn allowed the appropriation of the power of captured heads, which was used to stimulate the regeneration and fertility of the community's lands, herds, and kin groups. Drawing on economic theory, the authors argue that wrapping, offering of libations, and other ritual practices served to add value to a head, increasing its regenerative power, akin to the way that labor input adds value to a commodity.

Five centuries of colonial and republican rule discouraged head taking, but the people of *ayllu* Qaqachaka continued to use objects that are symbolic representations of heads in their efforts to ensure agricultural fertility and the continuity of their community. Today, as presumably in the past, the practices surrounding heads and their proxies also reaffirm *ayllu* identity, and transformed heads are integral to place-making practices that assert community boundaries and, thus, demarcate the productive resources available to *ayllu* members.

Following this richly textured and closely argued discussion of the past five centuries of heads and head taking in Qaqachaka, the authors move to a broader survey of the archaeological literature from three regions of the Andes. They use material culture, iconography, and architecture to identify similar structural relationships between head taking and the curation and transformation of heads on the one hand, and political power, fertility, and fecundity on the other hand. They do not assert that there is complete isomorphism in all of the meanings attached to recurring sets of related structures and practices, and they show that there were distinct cultural practices that reproduced these structures in the various societies under study. In their treatment of the Precolumbian era, the authors shift their emphasis somewhat to take advantage of archaeology's strength in identifying cultural patterns that occur over longer periods of time. They argue that practices related to the taking and transforming of heads changed in concert with broader shifts in political dynamics between centripetal and centrifugal polities (*sensu* Fausto).

*Heads of State* makes a real contribution to our understanding of Andean political dynamics. It also seeks to

advance the epistemology of historical and holistic anthropology. In their efforts to chart continuities and changes over several millennia, the authors move beyond simplistic use of ethnographic analogy to infer the processes that led to the material patterns we observe in the archaeological record. They advocate a broader approach, more akin to the direct historic approach, in which they trace broader structural relationships back in time. As a scholar who sees evidence of strong continuities across time and space, I welcome the authors' demonstration of continuities in the symbolism and the socially generative power of heads across millennia of Andean history. Readers who view culture as particularly malleable and emergent, however, might criticize the authors for their acceptance that there are deep and strong historical continuities that link contemporary indigenous peoples of the Andes to much earlier archaeologically known societies. Indeed, scholars have often uncritically invoked essentialist assumptions of cultural continuity in their interpretations, known as "*lo andino*" in the Andes. In this case, though, such a criticism is unwarranted as the authors use careful comparisons to chart broad structural similarities across space and time. Furthermore, they are quite sensitive to the historical transformations caused by Inka colonialism, Spanish colonial rule, and the emergence of the modern republican era.

The integration of the ethnographic and archaeological data in *Heads of State* is not seamless, but we should not expect it to be. The types of data produced by these different methodologies are conducive to different lines of inquiry. That said, the authors have nicely integrated the data from these two disciplines to the service of larger anthropological questions, highlighting the role of material culture in socially and politically generative processes and elucidating the importance of heads and related practices in generating political dynamics operating at various temporal and spatial scales. They also show how complementary gendered activities related to head taking are structurally transposed into other domains of activity such as weaving and farming.

The book's broader theoretical discussions will be accessible to most readers, but the detailed empirical data that the authors use to support their arguments might be difficult to follow for those unacquainted with the Andes, despite the authors' best efforts to write for a broader audience. Regional specialists, however, will very much appreciate the data-rich argumentation, particularly in light of the tendency, mentioned above, to assume rather than demonstrate historical continuities. For the additions it makes to our knowledge of the Andes and its cultural and political dynamics, and its contributions to anthropological epistemology, *Heads of State* promises to be an important book that will stimulate valuable discussion and debate on both topics.

**Immigrant Ambassadors: Citizenship and Belonging in the Tibetan Diaspora.** Julia Meredith Hess. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. 266 pp.

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For 50 years, the Tibetan diaspora has been located primarily in South Asia with only scattered communities elsewhere in the world. In the 1990s, this changed with the U.S. Tibetan Resettlement Project, in which the U.S. Congress authorized the official resettlement of 1,000 Tibetans from South Asia to the United States. These Tibetans were welcomed in communities around the United States, given assistance with housing and jobs, qualified for citizenship, and eventually were able to bring over their immediate family members; at present there are now over 10,000 Tibetans resident in the United States. What this resettlement meant for a Tibetan diaspora centered in South Asia is the subject of Julia Meredith Hess's recent book *Immigrant Ambassadors: Citizenship and Belonging in the Tibetan Diaspora*. What, she asks, does this new dispersion of Tibetans to the United States mean for Tibetan cultural and political identity, for what Hess and her subjects call "Tibetanness"?

In *Immigrant Ambassadors*, Hess explores questions of Tibetan nationalism and statelessness. If the modern world presumes that nations and states go together, the Tibetan case ironically reinforces this notion through the loss of their state. That is, Tibetan refugees in South Asia have strongly linked their nationalism to the Dalai Lama's stateless Tibetan Government-in-Exile. Loss of state has meant a robust development of nationalism in exile and a fierce defending of certain aspects of Tibetan identity. Although the Tibetan diaspora has always been a truly global one, the 1990s migration to the United States signaled something new: a relatively large, synchronized, and official relocation of refugees that sparked controversy and anxiety within the community (see, e.g., ch. 5, "The Tibetan Resettlement Project: The Lottery, the 'Lucky 1,000,' and Immigrant Ambassadors"). How, people asked, would this "brain drain" affect the exile government and its need for officials, teachers, and health workers? Would those Tibetans immigrating to the United States retain their political commitment to the Tibetan cause? Given the community import of this Tibetan migration to North America, and of new possibilities for global mobility in general, Hess's study of the U.S. Tibetan Resettlement Project is timely and welcome.

Based on research in both India and the United States, but especially in the Albuquerque–Santa Fe area, *Immigrant Ambassadors* presents a detailed ethnography of the Tibetan resettlement processes. From relations with their U.S. sponsors to expectations each had of the other to

negotiating new U.S. bureaucracies as well as cultural norms, Hess does an excellent job giving a sense of this major transition for the "Lucky 1,000" Tibetans. Part 3, "Tibetans in the United States," is thus in some ways the heart of the book. Especially poignant is her depiction of Tibetan efforts to ground their political allegiance to Tibet in their passports via the categorization of their "place of birth": as Tibet, as China, or using the name of the actual town, such as Lhasa. Tellingly, this struggle over passports began much earlier, with Tibetans resident in the United States in the 1970s. This connection is important in weaving together Tibetans' political struggle over the years and Hess's argument that immigration to and citizenship in the United States serves to reinforce Tibetans' political identity, providing them different means of agency than found in South Asia where the overwhelming majority of Tibetans do not have citizenship.

A clearly written book that I imagine would be very accessible for undergraduate students, *Immigrant Ambassadors* would be an excellent choice for the classroom. Unfortunately, it is only available in hardcover at a price too high for teaching. Were Stanford University Press to make it available in a paperback version, it would be a wonderful addition to courses on Tibet as well as immigration, transnationalism, and refugees. In sum, *Immigrant Ambassadors* provides a valuable look at Tibetan cultural flexibility and political action in the context of official immigration to the United States. As Tibetans increasingly move from South Asia to other destinations around the world, the questions Hess raises about Tibetan political allegiance in *Immigrant Ambassadors* will remain current, and the answers she provides—especially her conclusions regarding the portability of Tibetan political agency—will be an important point of engagement for future studies.

**Militarization and Violence against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East: A Palestinian Case Study.**

Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 231 pp.

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This powerful study by the most prolific, incisive, and committed Palestinian feminist social researcher working today is a wide-ranging analysis of the effects of militarization on the lives and bodies of women. Published in the important series *Cambridge Studies in Law and Society*, it is a unique study that focuses on Palestinian women's lives and traumas, in all their complexity, but one that also addresses the kinds of forces that shape women's experiences in other conflict zones from Bosnia to South Africa, Guatemala to Rwanda. This is a book that marries the intimate with

the political, insisting that they are inseparable, and that takes apart the devastating effects on women's lives of the historical and contemporary operations of colonialism, nationalism, occupation, the "war on terror," and security reasoning.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian is a brilliant and energetic scholar who is also a therapist, criminologist, and feminist activist. Over the past 15 years she has conducted extensive social research on trauma, abuse, and violence in the Occupied Territories. She draws on these projects for material for this book, and the material is stunning. She places at the center narratives of women and girls drawn from action research and projects of intervention that she has initiated: on domestic violence and child sexual abuse; on what she calls femicide (decrying the culturalization implied by the term *honor crimes*) and the legal justice system; on grief among mothers of martyrs and female relatives of political prisoners; on the effects of house demolitions and displacement; on militarization and women's education; on children's experience of the Israeli Separation Wall; and on political violence, whether in Arab East Jerusalem or Gaza.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian has an uncanny ability to elicit extraordinary narratives from the women and girls with whom she works so sympathetically. She listens well, perhaps because of her clinical training. She then interprets for the reader the meanings of these women's words, bringing out dimensions of affect and experience that we might have missed. For Shalhoub-Kevorkian, the silences are as crucial as the poignant and pointed things these women and girls say. Analyzing the said and the unsaid, she not only draws the shapes of their suffering but also brings out their resilience and agency. To her, these are not victims but, rather, active "frontliners" in the conflict. She reads the power of hope, love, belonging, and survival in one girl's description of the pigeons that refused to fly away when her house was demolished. She reveals how women respond to their situations, creating counterspaces for their survival, resisting the degradations, protecting their families and rebuilding safe havens, and dealing with torn loyalties as they carry the nation's hopes and live its consequences.

The most incisive contribution of this study lies in the delicate balance Shalhoub-Kevorkian manages in her assessment of the interactions between the personal and political in the Palestinian context. She does not shy away from bringing to light and condemning familial or social violence against women or oppressive practices that limit their possibilities. Yet she astutely and concretely shows how these forms of violence are related to the dynamics of colonization, the context of militarization, and the dire economics of occupation. As she says, "The challenge is not only to analyze the structures of oppression but also to take into account the political and social contexts that activate, encourage, and mediate those oppressions" (p. 135). She considers legal, medical, and customary

institutions as they have developed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, especially in the past 15 years but also tracing history back to the Nakba (catastrophe) of 1947–48; she looks hard at the situation of Palestinian men humiliated at Israeli checkpoints, out of work, and vulnerable to imprisonment. What gender dynamics are created? What happens to daughters, wives, and others? Shalhoub-Kevorkian uncovers the central dilemma for Palestinian women: family, society, culture, and nation are both sources of affirmation and oppression (p. 81).

Although she claims to privilege firsthand testimony and women's voices, to my anthropological tastes this book does not give us enough of them. So many more of these vivid quotations from impressive and articulate women fill the pages of her 22 previous articles cited in the bibliography. It is a pity that not more of them could have been brought within the covers of this book, but perhaps others will go off and read the separate studies. And although the analysis is strong in many parts of the book, one is sometimes overwhelmed by the sweeping theorizations. I find talk of empire; of Razack's "interlocks" of race, class, and gender; of weaponization; of Foucauldian genealogy; and of Mohanty's international feminism less compelling than the intimate stories she offers of militarized life and death. The coverage of so many issues related to violence and gender gives the book a strangely urgent feel, as if everything must be said because time is running out. This urgency may be a function of the context that clearly drives Shalhoub-Kevorkian. This is a book, she makes clear, that is meant to set things right for the West, the popular media, and even the Western academy, which continually silence Palestinian voices and misrepresent Palestinian men as violent terrorists and Palestinian women sometimes as victims, sometimes as heartless. In the end, though, this book is redeemed by Shalhoub-Kevorkian's attention to those voices and her indomitable hope in the face of the suffering and courage she documents among those she describes as exiles at home.

**Made in Sheffield: An Ethnography of Industrial Work and Politics.** *Massimiliano Mollona.* New York: Berghahn, 2009. 212 pp.

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Although the popular image of Sheffield recalls its prosperous history as a center of industry producing cutlery and steel products, the current grim reality illustrates the

contradictions and reversals inherent in the neoliberal political project and the seeming death of industry as we know it. In counterpoint to the now burgeoning ethnographic literature describing workplaces in the global south, *Made in Sheffield* provides much-needed critical analysis of contemporary European work, specifically in post-Thatcher, “postindustrial” Britain. However, the book’s engagement with capital, class, and community, the enduring themes of Marxist enquiry, takes us well beyond the confines of the workplace, inviting favorable comparison to other anthropologists concerned with historically changing political economies (e.g., Smith and Narotzky’s *Immediate Struggles* [2006] and Kalb’s *Expanding Class* [1997]). Mollona’s research focuses on two workplaces in Sheffield: a small, semilegal workshop located in a peripheral urban area and a larger factory employing unionized workers. Unable to gain access to these locations as a researcher, Mollona entered as an employee. The result is a fine-grained account of the contingencies and contradictions of industrial work and working-class life in a particular place and time. This in itself is an important ethnographic undertaking, but all the more so because *Made in Sheffield* challenges many assumptions regarding working conditions in developed nations, notably the differences between unionized and nonunionized labor, and the political consciousness of each.

The book is divided into two parts, each focusing on a different workplace in which the labor process shapes divergent class identities and dispositions to work and politics. The context of the study is deindustrialization and the emergence of new forms of unionism in conjunction with flexible and informal economic strategies, financial deregulation, and the decline of welfare and union rights in the United Kingdom. One result of these dynamics is the revival of Victorian sweatshops as subcontractors avoid taxes, safety, and wage standards by employing peripheral workers to use antique machinery in small workshops. Within this context, Mollona considers two concurrent forms of class relations experienced by “artisans” and “proletarians,” a distinction illustrated in the first half of the book by different groups of workers in one such workshop. The physical and sensual experiences of work plus differing experiences of technology inform a worker’s sense of class position and, by extension, their economic and social practices. The “hot” workers in the forge are artisans who see technology as an extension of their inalienable skills. They diversify their income through informal work embedded within personalized networks, and their households are loose working groups of individuals who pool resources. The “cool” workers in the machine shop (and in the unionized factory, which is the focus of the second half of the book) experience equipment and technology as an extension of global capital, external to themselves and inhibiting the maximization of wages. These workers’ house-

holds are organized as nuclear families dependent on one main wage and are typically located in scattered commuter villages, rather than in the area directly surrounding their workplace.

The distinction between these two forms of class relations provides the basis for an extended discussion of alienation in the second part of the book. Mollona describes alienation as a separation between ideas of home and work, as economic activity becomes disembedded from social life and activities, a Polanyian conceptualization informed by but extending Carrier’s work. Within this theoretical framework, the differentiation between “hot” and “cold” workers reflects the distinction between socially embedded and disembedded work. Although the proletarian workers enjoy union representation and higher wages than the more peripheral artisans, Mollona indicates that the proletarian position is in fact more precarious because disembedded work results in higher levels of social isolation. The proletarian workers rely on factors such as ethnicity, leisure, and consumption, rather than class position to inform their identities, and this loss of communal identity and solidarity is reflected in the largely rhetorical change from “business unionism” to “community unionism.”

Mollona’s methodology nicely captures the very different social relations of the two groups of workers. Although the first part of the book, “Artisans,” feels like a conventional ethnography of a face-to-face community, the spatial and social separation between home and work among the proletarian workers in part 2 prevents them from forming *gemeinschaft*-like communities within which to site the field. As a result, the second part of the book centers on two life histories complemented by interviews with management and union representatives. The life stories illustrate how flexible, individualized work experiences actually render unionized proletarians more economically vulnerable and socially isolated—in their employment and unemployment—than the more flexible artisans with their more robust social networks. Proletarians, as seen in the two life histories, subjectively forge their identities through alienating domestic circumstances and consumption practices. By displacing and individualizing the commonality of shared class experience, proletarians also compound shop-floor alienation. Here, through demonstration of the inextricable links between production and consumption and alienation, Mollona provides compelling critical fodder to postindustrial claims about “liberation from work.” If dignity is associated with manual labor, indignity follows its demise.

Overall, this well-crafted book offers detailed critical analysis of the hegemonic institutions of English working-class life, including contemporary union politics, in light of deindustrialization. We also glean insights into gender politics in the “new economy,” although more so for the

ethnography's male working-class protagonists than for the women in their lives. This, then, is primarily a book about class, what Raymond Williams called "structures of feeling," and the presence or absence of opportunities for political mobilization in deindustrialized Britain today. It is a powerful contribution to the anthropology of work and economy in Europe and beyond, at a time when there is renewed interest in class, capitalism, and globalization. Theoretical clarity and the compelling ethnographic portrait of Sheffield—the bleak terrain represented in the award-winning British film *The Full Monty* (1997)—make this an excellent text for graduate and senior undergraduate classes.

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**Gossip and the Everyday Production of Politics.** *Niko Besnier*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009. 243 pp.

### ROBEY CALLAHAN

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In this compelling and ambitious account, Niko Besnier presents us with numerous profound insights into the relationship between gossip and power. The term *gossip* refers to an often degraded, usually gendered, informal, and "private" speech genre that would appear to be a social universal if allowances are made for the many ways it can vary cross-culturally and historically. The model of power promoted here is one that carries on from more recent criticisms of resistance—criticisms that seek to highlight issues of contingency and to problematize agency and intentionality. Although gossip is a tool of no little import for the advancement of the agendas of those with relatively little power in other areas of life, it can, as Besnier aptly demonstrates, arise from no easily or even reasonably discernible motives, have unintended consequences, backfire, and, of course, be made to serve the needs of the powerful. Throughout the book, readers are reminded that gossip and

its ties to power raise complex questions that should ideally guide a far greater portion of anthropological inquiry than they do.

The main ethnographic setting is the relatively isolated Nukulaelae Atoll (Tuvalu, Central Pacific), currently home to some 350 people with economic and familial connections that extend well beyond the physical horizon. As in most (all?) parts of the world, gossiping here is at once a "bad" and "shameful" activity and one from which most people derive a great deal of pleasure. It can also be highly divisive and destructive of reputations and social relations, facts that certainly add to its appeal for many. On the atoll gossip takes place mainly in the spatial marginality of the relatively informal "private"—"female" cooking huts, well away from the areas associated with more formal "public"—"male" manners of speaking and structures of power. And, yet, the effects of gossip are felt well beyond the small physical span of its routine instantiations. Along with the more formal local speech genres, gossip, for instance, is deeply implicated in the playing out of two competing local political discourses: one emphasizing egalitarianism, the other, hierarchy.

It is indeed not sufficient, as Besnier shows, to a proper reading of Nukulaelae gossip to limit the inquiry to the here and now of the cooking huts, for the things of which gossip speaks are always embedded in other events and conversations framed elsewhere in other genres. An understanding of the geographical-spatial and historical arrangements of these events and conversations taking place farther afield and over stretches of time is essential to a proper contextualization of the political importance of Nukulaelae gossip. To meet this task, Besnier goes to great pains to provide detailed background on the community's history of interactions with itself and outsiders, and he imposes a species of tentative order that allows the reader to begin to gain useful purchase on the real scale of gossip's importance. His admirably eclectic and innovative theorizing also draws into the fold a host of other areas of interest, including local experiences of emotions, religion, and sorcery, and morality more generally.

Besnier's account likewise draws attention to the roles ethnographers play in the course of their work within and beyond the field. As most anthropologists will readily attest, the socially ambiguous positionings they must endure, even after they have gained a high level of trust among the people with whom they are working, often make it difficult for them to handle in great depth matters relating to gossip. There are, of course, ways around such issues, but none compares with Besnier's rather direct approach: he, as some few before him, spent a great deal of time making recordings of actual strands of gossip—recordings that allow him to characterize the subtleties of the speech

genre as it plays out locally and to make promising strides in determining the wider political effects of themes of gossip as they relate topically to those expressed in other speech and literary genres within and beyond the atoll. Through carefully analyzed examples, Besnier details ways in which the resulting intermingling reveals time and again the often-subversive power of gossip to alter individual biographies, rework social relations, and effect political change.

Besnier rightly notes that many ethnographers have downplayed the political significance of gossip and, indeed, of politics more generally in their publications, often with the aim of avoiding or at least minimizing any negative effects their works may have on the people they study. Such an approach creates its own problems, not only for the study of power but also for the study of gossip. As stated, gossip as a speech genre normally paints people in a most unflattering light, one that can lead to scandal and, in many parts of the world, lawsuits. So it is not surprising that the academic representation of gossip and its themes can raise serious ethical concerns for anthropologists. In Besnier's case, we have, for instance, a group of people who have historically been represented, by both outsiders and by themselves, as living "peacefully and harmoniously" with each other. The nature of cooking-hut gossip, reframed here and interpreted within the literary genre of ethnography, cannot help but to undermine such a representation. It is not then surprising that ethical concerns form a recurrent theme throughout the book, and Besnier's examination of his own practice is, like so much else here, a welcome contribution.

Although on rare occasions elusive and fragmentary—perhaps in keeping with the stubbornly problematic nature of its subject and the ambitious scope of Besnier's project—*Gossip and the Everyday Production of Politics* is a remarkable and erudite work. It will be welcomed by those who seek a model ethnography for the embedding of everyday utterances within their wider social and historical contexts, and its attention to ethical issues will be appreciated by those who are not inclined to shy away from debates surrounding the production of anthropological knowledge. Beyond those interested solely in the ethnography of the region, key audiences will no doubt also include linguistic and political anthropologists and those keen on issues of agency and intentionality. As Besnier consistently demonstrates, the often contradictory, or at least highly intractable and always more than a little inscrutable, motives of individuals, coupled with the intriguingly complex contingencies of the practical realities that underlie all human interactions, subvert any attempt to reduce the political importance of what we tend to call "gossip" to simplistic functionalist readings or ethnographic "just so" stories.

**Under Construction: Making Homeland Security at the Local Level.** Kerry B. Foshier. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. 260 pp.

**SALLY ENGLE MERRY**

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How does a community prepare for a disaster whose shape and nature is unknown? This question forms the basis for Kerry Foshier's innovative and imaginative ethnography of the making of homeland security. Fortuitously, her project on understanding the nature of emergency preparedness coincided with the arrival of an unprecedented new level of threat in the form of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. She traces how a diverse group of firefighters, police, coast guard, emergency medical technicians, hazardous materials experts, FBI agents, postal workers, and an array of other government agencies concerned with security struggled to figure out how to handle these new possibilities of disaster. They had to cope with the uncertainty of the threat while making up a new entity called "homeland security" and a department to administer it. In her richly detailed book, she describes innumerable meetings and planning sessions in which a wide variety of agencies tried to figure out what they should do and how they could work together. Foshier's ethnography presents us with local actors at work, using pragmatic approaches to solve particular problems. Her focus is on practice: on the ways people figure out how to get things done and to solve problems in the context of an enormous new set of expectations about the threat of terrorism. The everydayness of the process, the tendency to figure things out as you go along, is the enduring insight of this fascinating book.

The fight against terrorism is usually conducted by senior experts in the defense and intelligence communities, but she shows that homeland security at the local level draws in other actors such as firefighters, police, and emergency room doctors with local knowledge and practices. Although expert discourse influenced the local world, it was ultimately the people in the local policy community who developed the new strategies to cope with the new threats. As they tried to remain flexible despite pressures for codification and institutionalization, they undermined the control of the defense planners (p. 19). Whatever the federal government imagined homeland security would be, it ended up being whatever the local town and city leaders of a variety of responder and emergency groups figured out might be a good idea, given the deep uncertainties about what they were planning for. The study emphasizes the local nature of the process—the tendency to muddle through by falling back on mundane, day-to-day ways of handling problems.

It was clearly difficult for this heterogeneous group of people to create a structure, and the one they formed consisted of a set of networks, nodes, and organizations (p. 50). In addition to the complexity of the local actors and their organizations, there was also considerable ambiguity about the relations among federal, state, and local entities. Fosher shows clearly that despite the overarching theory of a homeland security system, what they produced was organized around day-to-day problems, local knowledge, and everyday activities. It was these forms of knowledge and action that constituted the social life of homeland security. The book supports her claim that “one of the enduring tasks of anthropology is to find the places where apparently monolithic institutions are created, maintained, and transformed through everyday actions” (p. 13). The juxtaposition of this bottom-up everydayness with the top-down massive federal project of constructing a new organizational model of homeland security is a central insight of the book. It also highlights the value of an ethnographic approach.

*Under Construction* is located in Boston, with an emphasis on the techniques developed to deal with the harbor and its security. However, while the book describes how the homeland security problem was managed in this city, it also asks broader questions about the nature of the ethnographic project. One of its intriguing features is its analysis of the challenge of defining exactly who the relevant actors are. Because those who might respond to a disaster include such a wide range of actors, from police to public health officials to average citizens who need to be vigilant, such as lobstermen in Boston, it was not easy to delineate the field site. Fosher devotes considerable time to the difficulties of figuring out where she should go to understand this rapidly developing process of creating a homeland security system. She describes herself as working in an “inter” field, studying the interrelations among agencies, rather than inside a single one. Police departments, hospital emergency rooms, or fire stations are relatively conventional although uncommon sites of anthropological inquiry, but their interrelations in the project of imagining an unimaginable disaster and developing a strategy for dealing with it are certainly new terrain for ethnographic inquiry.

Fosher acknowledges the unorthodox nature of her field site and inquiry. She describes the skepticism she experienced from some anthropologists as she set about studying military and intelligence agencies and the problem of national security. However, the book successfully forges new ground. She demonstrates that it is possible to study a phenomenon in the making, in a complex and multilayered political situation, through the lens of local practices and forms of knowledge. *Under Construction* shows that anthropology offers important insights into such heterodox phenomena as the construction of homeland

security during a period of national crisis and panic. Not only can ethnography be done under these conditions but the ethnographic focus on microscenes, on practices, and on categories and meanings provides a kind of analysis absent from other ways of understanding what it means to build a new social system such as homeland security. By pushing the boundaries of ethnography in the problem she chose to study and the way she demarcated the field site, Fosher shows the value of an ethnographic approach to understanding rapidly changing, highly complex state systems. Moreover, because this book builds on her previous practical experience in the field of emergency preparedness and articulates her interest in contributing to this field, it underscores the value of an engaged anthropology. On top of this, she has produced an engaging and highly readable text.

**Other-Worldly: Making Chinese Medicine through Transnational Frames.** *Mei Zhan*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009. 240 pp.

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Chinese medicine is commonly invoked as an “alternative” to biomedicine. The impulse to pose Chinese medicine in such a relation is perhaps understandable, given growing discontent with biomedical healthcare, but the contrast typically rests on dualisms that misapprehend Chinese medicine as a regionally and civilizationally bound tradition. Framed in this manner, Chinese medicine may serve certain imaginations of an outside, but it itself is rendered parochial.

Mei Zhan’s book, *Other-Worldly*, offers deep therapy for this problem. Eschewing narratives of a coherent Chinese milieu from which Chinese medicine originates, Zhan traces the emergent worlds made through its practices and movements between Shanghai and the San Francisco Bay Area. In doing so, Zhan enacts a polemic against some of the dominant conceptual frames in studies of Chinese medicine and contemporary China, the most salient being those posing the traditional versus the modern, the cultural versus the scientific, and the local versus the global. Even the notion of cultural difference undergoes critique. The difference of culture, Zhan argues forcefully, cannot be a starting point for understanding Chinese medicine; instead, such difference is produced in situated practices that are always already translocal in imagination and material reach. In fact, cultural difference, in Chinese medicine worlds, is not simply an outcome but also a means.

A means for what? “Worlding.” *Worlding* is Zhan’s term for conveying the multiple, often contradictory, translocal

practices and aspirations that permeate Chinese medicine. Attention to worlding obviates the dualisms already mentioned, showing them to be self-conscious tropes and repertoires for variously situated projects. The analytic of worlding is fleshed out in the introduction, along with a trenchant critique of the tacit acceptance of science's self-evidence in both medical anthropology and science and technology studies (STS). Zhan proposes recasting STS as a form of inquiry attentive to processes of formation of knowledges, objects, and relationships (worlding, perhaps?), rather than as a field that implicitly takes science for granted. This formulation, which recalls questions raised in sociocultural anthropology about the discipline's own organizing object, "culture," will provoke scholars studying a wide range of problems, "scientific" or not.

Chapter 1 unpacks a fascinating history of how Chinese medicine has been translocal for some time. It juxtaposes a moment in the late 1960s when China, in leftist internationalist spirit, trained African doctors with a recent moment in Shanghai when Chinese medicine comes to stand for California lifestyle. The question to ask of Chinese medicine is what particular worlds and connections are sought through the translocal at different conjunctures.

Chapter 2 focuses on entrepreneurial practitioners in Shanghai. Their figurations of virtue, skill, and kindness as selling points for their medical practice, Zhan argues, show that engagements with the market do not simply reduce Chinese medicine to commodity. Instead, commodification and medicalization serve as "new and contingent terrains" on which people forge new dreams and nightmares about the care that Chinese medicine can offer.

Chapter 3 considers the ambivalent work that stories of Chinese medical "miracles" do. They mark Chinese medicine's power and efficacy at moments when biomedicine has failed, while at the same time marking that power as exceptional. Zhan uses these miracles to throw into relief the durability of the hierarchical division between "science" and "knowledge" across a number of academic fields.

Chapter 4 looks closely at how clinicians in Shanghai translate—or question the translatability of—Chinese medicine into and out of biomedical comparability, such as when a biomedical practitioner visits the Chinese medical clinic where Zhan is observing. A wonderful ethnographic moment shows a doctor explaining to a visiting biomedical practitioner which modality of Chinese medical treatment would be best suited for a particular biomedical diagnosis, only to gently displace biomedical diagnosis for the particular case at hand.

Chapter 5 tells the stories of several women from prominent families of Chinese medicine. Zhan focuses on their pursuits of medical vocations overseas, in both Chinese medicine and biomedicine, to recuperate a history missing in sanctioned accounts of the transmission of

Chinese medical expertise through male lineage. At the same time, Zhan refuses to reify patrilineage, showing instead how these women recast power relations in their families, often by activating other gendered and translocal dichotomies, including those between biomedicine and Chinese medicine.

Chapter 6 tackles cultural essentialisms most squarely. A doctor from China anchors Chinese medicine in China while speaking at a summit in San Francisco. Students of Chinese medicine in California question whether China is a suitable place to learn Chinese medicine in the wake of Communism and Westernization. Rather than critique these simplifications, Zhan unpacks their contexts of enunciation—concern for China's place in an emergent world of Chinese medicine and desires for a primordial or spiritual alternative. By putting these contradicting cases aside one another, Zhan demonstrates that "China" and "Chinese culture" are not the starting points for Chinese medicine but, rather, provisional outcomes of situated worldings.

*Other-Worldly* deconstructs some of the most foundational dualisms in a number of fields. It not only drives home through accumulated examples and arguments the constitutive imbrications of Chinese medicine and its assumed geographic and conceptual outsides but also illuminates these imbrications' subtleties—the mingling of desire, geographic imagination, and healing practice; the careful processes of commensuration and incommensuration; the shifting configurations of family; the varieties of cultural and national belonging; and the conflicting cosmopolitan aspirations. The broader argument about translocality resonates powerfully throughout the book, pointedly repudiating assumptions that are deeply entrenched in the practical and theoretical worlds surrounding Chinese medicine. Meanwhile, for readers less directly concerned with Chinese medicine, *Other-Worldly* offers deep insights into the intimacies and techniques through which global connections are imagined and forged. And, in doing so, it invites me to wonder, in the spirit of Zhan's book: in a world where practitioners, students, and researchers of Chinese medicine have already read *Other-Worldly*, what other worlds might Chinese medicine make?

**Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women's Lives through War and Peace in Sierra Leone.** *Chris Coulter.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009. 289 pp.

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Through a focus on women's narratives and their interpretations, Chris Coulter has created a sensitive and careful

study of the conflict and postconflict experiences of young women abducted by rebels during the Sierra Leone war, who became involved as wives, fighters, slaves, spies, and survivors. In what was undoubtedly difficult ethnography of mostly retrospective interviews about past experiences, she details how women's strategies and choices can emerge from a study of the meaning and interpretations they give to their past experiences, although all of these are conditioned and at times competitive with the meanings given by their families, their local communities, and the system of international humanitarian aid.

Coulter smartly resists trying to make these experiences neatly patterned but, rather, explains the perspectives of young women themselves attempting to navigate the continuities and discontinuities of a constantly shifting social system. She takes as a starting point literature that warns against compartmentalizing war and peace as discrete parts and, instead, emphasizes violence as a continuum within parallel (political, economic, social) spheres (Aretxaga 1997; Cockburn and Zarkov 2002; Henry 2005).

The structure of the book unfolds logically and progressively. Chapter 1 situates the narratives with a brief but careful history of the conflict, with roots both in Western demand for natural resources and disgruntled youth eager for political voice. Chapter 2 contextualizes the rest of the book with an ethnographic background to gender in Sierra Leone. The heart of the book really begins in chapter 3, which is a collection of firsthand accounts of women narrating their experiences of abduction and the personal violence they experienced during the everyday life of their captivity. Narratives typically focus on tangible, critical events, and trace the tear of torn fabric to where the disruption of life began.

Chapter 4 is a general look at gender and war in Sierra Leone. Coulter positions accounts of rape and sexual abuse relative to local notions of morality, masculinity, and femininity, as well as to the global discourse on rape as a weapon of war. She notes the methodological conundrums of this fieldwork—while not resolving it—as she finds that women's narrations of rape do not seem to function as the “talk therapy,” so often universalized in Western psychological discourse; rather, they have the opposite effect of further stigmatizing women and ostracizing them socially through the shame of their past associations.

Chapter 5 examines women's postwar demobilization and attempts at reintegration. Believing that these women were not a specific threat to the peace process, no specific measures targeting girls were taken by the national or UN disarmament or demobilization missions; girls themselves were either personally reticent or socially discouraged to formally participate, as doing so would have meant public acknowledgement of a more active “participant” role, rather

than “victim”; fearing this increased stigmatization, women often strategically remained silent.

Chapters 6 and 7 detail lives postwar, and how women considered still tainted by rebel “wildness” navigated the processes of social exclusion that many now faced. Although humanitarian agencies gave demobilizing men the lion's share of formal education, training, and job skills, women became caught in a bit of a trap—formal participation in the demobilization process would provide economic benefit but was socially discouraged by families fearing ostracization; however, the increased economic benefits of demobilization were also sought after by families and could be a tool by which formerly abducted women would increase their status, by then being able to contribute to the economic productivity of the household.

Coulter's biggest contribution is her use of narratives to problematize the dominant humanitarian discourse of “men as perpetrators—women as victims”; she illustrates that these labels are woefully inadequate to explain women's experiences within the complex roles that they play—as both victim and perpetrator, wives and combatants, spies and slaves—all at once. As such, the book contributes nicely to anthropology, gender and conflict, African studies, history, and even regional West Africa studies.

The book is not perfect, mostly in that I fear it will face a somewhat limited readership. It is a dissertation-turned-book, and as such, the style tends to fall victim to its origins. The language is structured not so much to seductively draw in and inform the reader as it is to self-defend against attack through metanarrative signage. For example, that very peculiar dissertation writing, “As I will discuss later,” “as I will show,” “as has been indicated,” “in this chapter I will discuss,” “I described above how,” and “it has been my attempt to” can all occur literally within the space of a few pages. There are assessments of the influence of culturally extant models of patrilineal reckoning with viri-patri location, or of clan-exogamy–village endogamy with matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. Again, for a dissertation, this is the preferred (and necessary) language, coverage, and style, and it certainly allows the author authority in presenting her findings. My concern is that a broader audience—relief workers in particular—could certainly benefit from Coulter's careful insights into how the Western discourse of women as passive victim is challenged locally, or how postwar integration efforts offer very limited choices or means for women to make a living; I fear that the book's academic writing may prove too dry for the nonanthropologist. This is intimate subject matter not always matched by the intimate narration it deserves. That being said, what Coulter has crafted here is a solid summary of methodologically rare, opportunistic, thought-provoking research. I hope it is read widely.

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