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The current issue of the bulletin is the last one to appear in this form. Since September 2024, we have started contributing short recommendations of books or articles to every monthly issue of “Arnoldus Nota” (Recommended reading) and we hope to reach more potential readers in this new way.

Since we have not ceased to browse through journals and books, and read texts relevant for the interface of anthropology and mission, we are ready to share our findings. If you have ideas how we could do it still better, please, let us know.

We would like to remind our readers that we are not reviewing the books and articles presented here (in the sense of giving a critical assessment of their contents) but intend to draw the readers' attention to the publications that are of particular interest for those who are engaged with both – anthropology and mission. The material in the bulletin partly consists of quotes taken from the presented books and articles. We encourage the readers to refer to the original texts, most of which are accessible online.

Review of Books

(by Othmar Gächter and Stanisław Grodź)

Richards, Paul, and Perri 6: Mary Douglas. New York: Berghahn Books, 2023. 156 pp. ISBN 978-1-80073-981-9. (pbk)

This handy, concise book covers the life of Mary Douglas, one of the most important anthropologists of the second half of the 20th century. Her work focused on how human groups classify each other, and how they resolve the anomalies that then arise. Classification, she argued, emerges from practices of social life, and is a factor in all deep and intractable human disputes. This biography offers an introduction to how her distinctive approach developed across a long and productive career and how it applies to current pressing issues of social conflict and planetary survival.

Gillian Tett: A very thought-provoking book that provides a new way to look at modern conflict, disinformation and the loss of trust in institutions.

Táíwò, Olúfémi: Against Decolonisation. Taking African Agency Seriously. London: Hurst & Company, 2022. 270+XIX. ISBN 978-1-787386921. (pbk)

Decolonisation has lost its way. Originally a struggle to escape the West's direct political and economic control, it has become a catch-all idea, often for performing 'morality' or 'authenticity'; it suffocates African thought and denies African agency.

Olúfémi Táíwò fiercely rejects the indiscriminate application of 'decolonisation' to everything from literature, language and philosophy to sociology, psychology and medicine. He argues that the decolonisation industry, obsessed with cataloguing wrongs, is seriously harming scholarship on and in Africa. He finds 'decolonisation' of culture intellectually unsound and wholly unrealistic, conflating modernity with coloniality, and groundlessly advocating an

open-ended undoing of global society's foundations. Worst of all, today's movement attacks its own cause: 'decolonisers' themselves are disregarding, infantilising and imposing values on contemporary African thinkers.

This powerful, much-needed intervention questions whether today's 'decolonisation' truly serves African empowerment. Táíwò's is a bold challenge to respect African intellectuals as innovative adapters, appropriators and synthesizers of ideas they have always seen as universally relevant. [Text from the book cover]

Táíwò argues (pp. 37-38): "If we find that the independent state continues to exhibit features of colonialism – such as denying freedom to its citizens, being obsequious towards the ex-colonial overlords, acting in ways that are inconsistent with their being sovereign states – we must establish, in each case, the casual factors at work. We must not automatically conclude that colonialism has not ended, unless we are prepared to grant that the rulers of such states are permanent children who are forever beholden to their former colonisers. In other words, if we find choices that mirror old colonial forms of rule, we should not rush to conclude that these could only be the result of continuing colonial hold on the ex-colonised's capacity for choice-making. We need to be reminded that the exercise of agency on the part of the colonised cannot be limited to those choices that are 'anti-colonial'. A free people can express their freedom in any manner they choose. One of the defining features of colonial rule was the denial and displacement of local agency but, [...] while this agency may have been curbed, it was never dormant, much less non-existent, even as colonial rule lasted. Speaking of the post-independence period as if native agency matters little, if at all, is a remarkable failing of the decolonisation discourse."

Joseph, Camille, and Isabelle Kalinowski: Unerhörtes Sprechen. Franz Boas und die indianischen Texte. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023. 175 pp. ISBN 978-38353-5342-8. (hbk)

Warum hat Franz Boas seine bei den indigenen Völkern Nordamerikas gesammelten Texte nicht mehr kommentiert und interpretiert? Camille Joseph und Isabelle Kalinowski lüften ein epistemologisches Rätsel.

Franz Boas (1858-1942) gilt als Gründervater der amerikanischen Anthropologie. In den indigenen Gebieten der Nordwestküste sammelte er unzählige Masken, Werkzeuge, Bilder, Skelette, Zahlen und Messdaten, vor allem aber Texte und Sprachen. Nachdem er zehn Jahre als Kurator im American Museum of Natural History (New York) tätig war, hörte er aber plötzlich auf, Gegenstände anzuhäufen. Stattdessen veröffentlichte er ab 1905 vor allem Texteditionen, Mythen und Übersetzungen und konzentrierte sich auf Sprachobjekte. Dieser Bruch in seinem Verhältnis zur Materialität sowie seine Editionen, die zumeist ohne Kommentar erschienen, geben Rätsel auf, denen die Autorinnen auf die Spur kommen. Boas' wissenschaftliche Methode, die hier gründlich rekonstruiert wird, richtet sich auf die Möglichkeitsbedingungen der Hörbarkeit von Fremdsprachen: Jenseits allem guten kulturellen Willen stößt der Forscher auf die Grenzen seiner Kompetenz, fremde Töne zu vernehmen, wie Boas in seinem Konzept der „Hörblindheit“ zusammenfasst. Seinem lebenslangen Versuch, die Aufmerksamkeit auf feine Variationen zu lenken, ist „Unerhörtes Sprechen“ gewidmet.

Lynch, Paul: Persuasions of God. Inventing the Rhetoric of René Girard. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2024. 2012. ISBN 978-0-271-09700-1. (hbk)

Searching for new religious forms amid the lingering influence of Christianity, Lynch turns to René Girard, the important twentieth-century thinker on the sacred and its expression within the Christian tradition. Lynch repurposes Girard's mimetic theory to invent a post-Christian way of speaking to, for, and especially about God. Girard theorized the sacred as the nexus of violence, order, and sacralization that lies at the heart of religion. What Lynch advocates in our current moment of religious *kairos* is a paradoxically meek rhetoric that conscientiously refuses rivalry, actively exploits tradition through complicit invention, and boldly seeks a holiness free of exclusionary violence. Pursuing a project of "theorhetic", a radical new approach to speaking about the divine, Lynch aims to reinvent God through the reimagined themes of meekness, sacrifice, atonement, and holiness. From these, "Persuasions of God" offers religion reimagined for our post-secular age.

Purzycki, Benjamin Grant and Theiss Ben-dixen (eds.): *The Minds of Gods. New Horizons in the Naturalistic Study of Religion*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024. 265+XVIII pp. ISBN 987-1-3502-6574-5. (pbk)

Why are humans obsessed with divine minds? What do gods know and what do they care about? What happens to us and our relationships when gods are involved?

Drawing from neuroscience, evolutionary, cultural, and applied anthropology, social psychology, religious studies, philosophy, technology, and cognitive and political sciences, “The Minds of Gods” probes these questions from a multitude of naturalistic perspectives. Each chapter offers brief intellectual histories of their topics, summarizes current cutting-edge questions in the field, and points to areas in need of attention from future researchers. Through an innovative theoretical framework that combines evolutionary and cognitive approaches to religion, this book brings together otherwise disparate literatures to focus on a topic that has comprised a lasting, central obsession of our species. [back-cover description]

The volume contains sixteen contributions preceded by an introduction. The last chapter “Never Mind the Gods: Explaining Unbelief and Nonreligion” by Anne Lundahl Mauritsen and Valerie van Mulukom may be of particular interest here. The authors state (pp. 191-192): “we have explored the puzzle of unbelief and nonreligion: Why and how do people come to care less about gods and instead become unbelieving and nonreligious? [...] Central to our discussion of the definition of unbelief and nonreligion is the idea that nonreligious belief and nonreligion should not be understood simply as the absence of religious belief, ideas, and practices. Rather [...] a potentially more productive way to think about nonreligious belief and nonreligion might be through the lens of worldviews: Worldviews are sets of beliefs and assumptions to help humans frame perception and experience and make sense of the world. They fulfill a number of psychological functions such as providing explanations, meaning, and a sense of purpose, and in so doing provide answers to the big questions of human experience, such as what is good and evil (axiology) and where we come from (cosmology).

It appears not to be the supernatural or religious content of beliefs within such worldviews that contributes to their efficacy, but their strength, coherency, and meaningfulness and, concurrently, the extent to which they are able to fulfill their function. Similarly, we discussed evidence that the effects of religious and nonreligious rituals are comparable, in particular their effects on social bonding, which appear mediated by positive affect and feelings of connectedness to something bigger (whether God, or the nonreligious physically or psychologically “larger” entities such as the group or the universe) experienced during the rituals.

So far, however, the most comprehensive explanatory research on nonreligion has focused on the absence of religion and religious belief [...]. Explanations are similarly “negatively” phrased: because individuals are unable to represent minds including supernatural minds (*mindblind atheism*), because religion declined in the face of the development of strong secular societal institutions (*apatheism*), because individuals grow up without cultural learning of religious concepts (*incredulous atheism*), and because individuals no longer accept intuitive ideas due to analytical thinking (*analytic atheism*).

[...] we suggest that a next step may be to run similar studies with a “positive” idea of unbelief and nonreligion. Keeping a worldview approach in mind, can we predict why certain beliefs occur in certain conditions (e.g., times and places)? Rather than asking why religious belief is absent, could we ask why a belief in science is the most frequently named belief by nonreligious nontheistic individuals in a (mostly Western) cross-cultural sample [...]? Descriptive cross-cultural research that uses open-ended questions, such as van Mulukom et al. (2022), may provide a starting point for investigating the variety of beliefs that perform important psychological functions, and the conditions in which they occur. [...]

The answers [...] would contribute evidence to our suggestion that it is the belief, worldview, or particular practice that fulfills important functions in human lives, rather than its supernatural content. Thus, the question of why and how people endorse nonreligious beliefs and engage in nonreligious rituals becomes a question of how belief and worldviews more broadly are important to support psychological functioning in

human lives, a highly important endeavor that may contribute to our understanding of the human condition, and to greater human flourishing.”

Fuchs, Sandhya: *Fragile Hope. Seeking Justice for Hate Crimes in India.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2024. 330 pp. ISBN 978-1-5036-3936-2. (pbk)

Against the backdrop of the global Black Lives Matter movement, debates around the social impact of hate crime legislation have come to the public fore. In India, a nation with vast socio-cultural diversity, and a complex colonial past, questions about the relationship between law and histories of oppression have become particularly pressing. Recently, India has seen a rise in violence against Dalits (ex-untouchables) and other minorities, with an emergent “Dalit Lives Matter” movement campaigning for the effective implementation of India’s only hate crime law: the 1989 Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act (PoA).

Drawing on long-term fieldwork with Dalit survivors of caste atrocities, human rights NGOs, police, and judiciary, Sandhya Fuchs unveils how Dalit commodities in the state of Rajasthan interpret and mobilize the PoA. Moving beyond statistics and judicial arguments, Fuchs uses the intimate lens of personal narratives to lay bare how legal processes converge and conflict with political and gendered concerns about justice for caste atrocities, creating new controversies, inequalities, and hopes.

Tilche, Alice: *Adivasi Art and Activism. Curation in a Nationalist Age.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2022. 246 pp. ISBN 978-0-295-74971-6. (pbk)

As India consolidates an aggressive model of economic development, indigenous tribal people known as adivasis continue to be overrepresented among the country’s poor. Adivasis make up more than eight hundred communities in India, with a total population of more than a hundred million people who speak more than three hundred different languages. Although their historical presence is acknowledged by the state and they are lauded as a part of India’s ethnic identity today, their poverty has been compounded by the suppression of their cultural heritage and lifestyle.

In “Adivasi Art and Activism,” Alice Tilche draws on anthropological fieldwork conducted in rural western India to chart changes in adivasi aesthetics, home life, attire, food, and ideas of religiosity that have emerged from negotiation with the homogenizing forces of Hinduization, development, and globalization in the twenty-first century. She documents curatorial projects located not only in museums and art institutions, but in the realms of the home, the body, and the landscape. “Adivasi Art and Activism” raises vital questions about preservation and curation of indigenous material and provides an astute critique of the aesthetics and politics of Hindu nationalism.

White, Thomas: *China’s Camel Country. Livestock and Nation-Building at a Pastoral Frontier.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2024. 238+XXII pp. ISBN 978-0-295-752433. (pbk)

China today positions itself as a model of state-led environmentalism. On the country’s arid rangelands, grassland conservation policies have targeted pastoralists and their animals, blamed for causing desertification. State environmentalism – in the form of grazing bans, enclosure, and resettlement – has transformed the lives of many ethnic minority herders in China’s western borderlands. However, this book shows how such policies have been contested and negotiated on the ground, in the context of the state’s intensifying nation-building project. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Alasha, in the far west of China’s Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Thomas White describes how ethnic Mongols have foregrounded the local breed of Bactrian camel, mobilizing ideas of heritage and resource conservation to defend pastoralism.

In exploring how the greening of the Chinese state affects the entangled lives of humans and animals at the margins of the nation-state, this study is both a political biography of the Bactrian camel and an innovative work of political ecology addressing critical questions of rural livelihoods, conservation, and state power. [back-cover description]

Starr, Julie E.: *Modified Bodies. Material Selves. Beauty Ideals in Post-Reform Shanghai.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2023. 212+XIV pp. ISBN 978-0-295751764. (pbk)

Thin body, white skin, and big eyes. Such beauty ideals are ubiquitous across Shanghai, where salons and weight-loss clinics offering an array of products and treatment options beacon city dwellers with promises of a 'better life.' Set against the backdrop of China's post-reform era, "Modified Bodies, Material Selves" compares the radically different attitudes of middle-class Chinese and Western women living in Shanghai toward the pursuit of beauty. Through comparative ethnography, anthropologist Julie E. Starr parses how experience of bodies and embodied identities, and the politics ascribed to them, are culturally produced for both groups of women. With a focus on the ways in which late capitalism interacts with different bodies, Starr joins an ongoing conversation about the impact of recent economic reforms on social life in China. [back-cover description]

Liu, Huwy-min Lucia: *Governing Death, Making Persons. The New Chinese Way of Death.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022. 252 pp. ISBN 978-1-5017-6722-7. (pbk)

"Governing Death, Making Persons" tells the story of how economic reforms and changes in the management of death in China have affected the governance of persons. The Chinese Communist Party has sought to channel the funeral industry and death rituals into vehicles for reshaping people into vehicles for reshaping people into "modern" citizens and subjects. Since the Reform and Opening period and the marketization of state funeral parlors, the Party has promoted personalized funerals in the hope of promoting a market-oriented and individualistic ethos. However, things did not go as planned.

Huwy-min Lucia Liu writes about funerals she witnessed and the life stories of two kinds of funeral workers: state workers who are quasi-government officials and semi-legal private funeral brokers. She shows that, today, end-of-life commemoration in urban China is characterized by the resilience of social conventions and not a shift toward market economy individualization. Rather than seeing a rise of individualism and the decline of a socialist self, Liu sees the durability of socialist, religious, communal, and relational ideas of self, woven together through creative ritual framings in spite of their contradictions.

Abu-Lughod, Lila, Rema Hammami, and Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (eds.): *The*

Cunning of Gender Violence. Geopolitics and Feminism. Durham: Duke University Press, 2023. 468 pp. ISBN 978-1-4780-2043-1. (pbk)

"The Cunning of Gender Violence" focuses on how a once visionary feminist project has folded itself into contemporary world affairs. Combating violence against women and gender-based violence constitutes a highly visible and powerful agenda enshrined in international governance and law and embedded in state violence and global securitization.

Case studies on Palestine, Bangladesh, Iran, India, Pakistan, Israel, and Turkey, as well as on UN and US policies trace the silences and omissions, along with the experiences of those subjected to violence, to question the rhetoric that claims the agenda as a "feminist success story." Because religion and racialized ethnicity, particularly "the Muslim question," run so deeply through the institutional structures of the agenda, the contributions explore ways they may be affirming or enabling rationales and systems of power, including civilizational hierarchies, that harm the very people it seeks to protect.

Fjeld, Heidi E.: *The Return of Polyandry. Kinship and Marriage in Central Tibet.* New York: Berghahn, 2022. 210+XXII pp., ills. ISBN 978-1-80073-607-8 (hb); 978-1-80539-719-9 (pbk)

Tibet is known for its broad range of marriage practices, particularly polyandry, where two or more brothers share one wife. With economic development and massive Chinese social and political reforms, including new marriage laws prohibiting plural marriages, polyandry was expected to disappear from Tibetan communities. This book takes as its starting point the surprising increase in polyandry in Panam Valley from the 1980s. It explores married lives in polyandrous houses and develops a theory of a flexible kinship of potentiality through the lens of a farming village in Tibet Autonomous Region. [back-cover description]

YESHE: This excellent work will be of great value to not only Tibetologists and scholars of anthropology of kinship, but also to anyone interested in learning about polyandry as a social and cultural phenomenon, or curious about the social and family organization of Tibetan regions.

Golestaneh, Seema: *Unknowing and the Everyday. Sufism and Knowledge in Iran.* Durham:

Duke University Press, 2023. 233 pp. ISBN 978-1-4780-1953-4. (pbk)

In “Unknowing and the Everyday” Seema Golestaneh examines how Sufi mystical experience in Iran shapes contemporary life. Central to this process is *ma‘rifat*, or “unknowing” – the idea that, as it is ultimately impossible to fully understand the divine, humanity must operate from an engaged awareness that it knows nothing. Golestaneh shows that rather than considering *ma‘rifat* an obstacle to intellectual engagement, Sufis embrace that there will always be that which they do not know. From this position, they affirm both the limits of human knowledge and the mysteries of the profane world. Through ethnographic case studies, Golestaneh traces the affective and sensory dimensions of *ma‘rifat* in contexts such as the creation of collective Sufi spaces, the interpretation of Persian poetry, formulations of selfhood and non-selfhood, and the navigation of the socio-material realm. By outlining the relationship between *ma‘rifat* and religious, aesthetic, and social life in Iran, Golestaneh demonstrates that for Sufis the outer bounds of human thought are the beginning rather than the limit.

Barker, Joshua: *State of Fear. Policing a Post-colonial City.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2024. 309 pp. ISBN 978-1-4780-3076.8. (pbk)

In “State of Fear,” Joshua Barker reckons with how fear and violence are produced and reproduced through everyday practices of rule and control. Examining the ethnographic and historical genealogies of Indonesian policing, Barker focuses on the city of Bandung, which is permeated by anxieties about security, in spite of the fact that it’s a relatively safe city according to the data. Drawing from his fieldwork there during the latter years of authoritarian New Order regime, Barker traces the complex relationship between the state and vigilante groups like neighborhood watch patrols and street gangs. Through interviews with police officers, vigilantes, and street-level toughs, he uncovers a struggle between two visions of social control that continues to animate policing in Indonesia: the modern, bureaucratic approach favoured by the state, and a territorial approach that divides the city into fiefdoms overseen by charismatic individuals of authority.

Synthesizing insight from in-depth ethnographic, historical, and theoretical work, Barker

reveals how authoritarianism can take root not just from the top down but also from the bottom up.

Berry, Nicole S.: *Good Intentions in Global Health. Medical Missions, Emotion, and Health Care across Borders.* New York: New York University Press, 2024. 181 pp. ISBN 978-1-4798-2537-0. (pbk)

In the past two decades, medical missions have gained popularity among medical professionals, who view these excursions as important ethical interventions. Indeed, the notion of giving back by volunteering in rural or impoverished communities is celebrated as an ideal act of selflessness, one whose effects are unquestionably beneficial to those being served.

“Good Intentions in Global Health” is a groundbreaking exploration of the growing realm of informal global health engagement, shedding light on the intricate interplay between intentions, emotions, and ethical considerations. Drawing on fieldwork in Guatemala, Nicole S. Berry investigates those who volunteer for short-term medical missions, revealing how the intent to do good shapes their everyday understandings of their own actions taken in the global health domain.

Berry uncovers how the glorification of medical missions can obscure problems that stem from North American clinicians doctoring in places where they typically do not understand the context. The short-term nature of missions also means that volunteers are not privy to the long-term effects of their actions – the potential harms that may arise from a lack of sustained follow-up care or the utter absence of documentation that they were even there. By relying on gut instincts to reassure themselves that they are doing good, volunteers often bypass a comprehensive assessment of the ethical dimensions underlying their global health work.

“Good Intentions in Global Health” shows why desires and emotions are increasingly important to contemporary global health. She makes the case that we must pay attention to volunteers’ perceptions of their work, however wrong-headed or naïve, in order to truly influence global health on the ground.

Schmidt, Elmar, and Monika Wehrheim (eds.): *Imaginarios ecológicos en América Latina. Crónicas coloniales, ensayos, novelas, cine*

y prácticas culturales. Göttingen: V&R unipress; Bonn University Press, 2022. 310 pp. ISBN 978-3-8471-14239. (hbk)

Contaminación ambiental, extractivismo, cambio climático: las catástrofes ecológicas condicionan la vida latinoamericana de muchas maneras. Con el trasfondo de las experiencias actuales en un contexto de crisis ambiental, este volumen explora ideas e imaginarios de la naturaleza. Reúne contribuciones internacionales de estudios literarios y culturales sobre conceptos históricos de la naturaleza, representaciones del petróleo, perspectivas ecofeministas, contextos urbanos, escenarios distópicos así como la crítica a la modernidad y al antropocentrismo en la literatura latinoamericana. Textos de ficción, crónicas e historias naturales, películas, nuevos medios de comunicación y prácticas culturales indígenas sirven para determinar diferentes percepciones latinoamericanas del medio ambiente, en la era del antropoceno, en sus complejas facetas.

Bruno, Maria C.: *Growing the Taraco Peninsula. Indigenous Agricultural Landscapes.* Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2024. 232 pp. ISBN 987-1-64642-612-6. (pbk)

“Growing the Taraco Peninsula” is an examination of long-term human-environmental interactions through agriculture among Indigenous communities of the Taraco Peninsula, Bolivia, located on the shores of Lake Titicaca in the Andes. Maria Bruno weaves together ethnographic observations of modern-day Aymara farming practices with an in-depth study of archaeological remains, particularly plants, to examine the development of agricultural landscapes through time.

Beginning with the first small-scale communities of the Formative period (1500 BCE–500 CE) through the development of the Tiwanaku state (500–1100 CE), Bruno draws upon ethnographic insights from modern-day Indigenous farming practices on the peninsula as well as archaeological evidence from excavations at four sites to explore the landscapes and human-plant relationships that Taraco communities created through their agricultural practices. Through evaluation of environmental data on climate and land-use dynamics – rainfall, lake level, and soil character and distribution – she proposes a new hypothesis of how raised-field agriculture may have emerged in the region. With a detailed

analysis of foodways at the Kala Uyuni site, her study reveals how Indigenous Taraco communities sustainably incorporated crops and wild plants into their daily and special-occasion meals, connecting the agricultural landscapes to local and regional social and political dynamics.

Bringing together several indicators of the region’s long-term history and demonstrating that shifts in agriculture do not neatly correspond to the changes traditionally highlighted by archaeological culture histories, “Growing the Taraco Peninsula” reveals Indigenous landscape creation through farming on the Taraco peninsula as a critical example of sustainability.

Fisher, Chelsea: *Rooting in a Useless Land. Ancient Farmers, Celebrity Chefs, and Environmental Justice in Yucatán.* Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2023. 266+XIV pp. ISBN 978-0-520-39587-9. (pbk)

In “Rooting in a Useless Land”, Chelsea Fisher examines the deep histories of environmental justice conflicts in Mexico’s Yucatán Peninsula. She draws on her innovative archaeological research in Yaxunah, an Indigenous Maya farming community dealing with land dispossession, but with a surprising twist: Yaxunah happens to be entangled with prestigious sustainable development projects initiated by some of the most famous chefs in the world. Fisher contends that these initiatives inadvertently bolster the useless-land narrative – a colonial belief that Maya forests are empty wastelands – that has been driving Indigenous land dispossession and environmental injustice for centuries. “Rooting in a Useless Land” explores how archaeology, practiced within communities, can restore history and strengthen relationships built on contested ground.

Yáñez, Segundo E. Moreno: *Evangelización y configuración de la cristianidad ecuatoriana.* Quito: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador; Ediciones Abaya-Yala, 2024. 492 pp. ISBN 987-9942-46-036-3. (pbk)

La presente publicación no es una clásica historia de la Iglesia ecuatoriana, aunque en la formación de la ‘cristiandad colonial’ se tienen en cuenta las normas emanadas del poder colonial: Audiencia, concilios diocesanos, obispos, regulaciones en la aplicación del patronato real, etc. No se puede olvidar que dentro del proceso de colonización y evangelización han jugado un

papel los ‘doctrineros’ o curas de indios y los misioneros entre los pueblos de las forestas tropicales. Ellos coadyuvaron en la promoción de una nueva fe basada en el Evangelio, de nuevas concepciones éticas y morales, de complejos simbólicos culturales y de novedosos sistemas organizacionales como las cofradías, compadrazgos, priostazgos, etc. También ellos iniciaron un proceso deculturizador con el aniquilamiento de las religiones autóctonas o ‘idolatrías’, y de las prácticas denominadas de ‘hechicería’. Con este propósito se realiza un análisis de los diferentes modelos de evangelización, algunos orientados a fortalecer el sistema de cristiandad colonial, y otros a privilegiar las culturas indígenas bajo la consideración, según el Concilio Vaticano II, de que son ‘semillas del Evangelio’.

El modelo de ‘cristiandad colonial’ se mantuvo en el Ecuador, bajo otros parámetros políticos, durante el Período Republicano, ya en su versión del ‘Patronato’ o de la doctrina de ‘separación Iglesia-Estado’. La simbiosis cultural produjo nuevas formas de cultura religiosa, especialmente en las poblaciones rurales con predominante presencia indígena o afroamericana, para quienes todavía existen una ‘geografía sagrada’ y varios ciclos festivos integrados en un ‘calendario ritual’. Además de una reflexión sobre la ‘inculturación del Evangelio’ y la religiosidad popular como una ‘Teología del Pueblo’, este estudio ofrece pautas, desde la Antropología Cultural, para una reflexión teológica y sociológica, que expresen la experiencia religiosa ecuatoriana, la misma que debe ser valorada en el concierto de otras experiencias culturales.

Abreu, Maria Jose de: *The Charismatic Gymnasium. Breath, Media, and Religious Revivalism in Contemporary Brazil.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2021. 233+XIV pp. ISBN 978-1-478009719

In “The Charismatic Gymnasium” Maria Jose de Abreu examines how Charismatic Catholicism in contemporary Brazil produces a new form of total power through a concatenation of the breathing body theology, and electronic mass media. De Abreu documents a vast religious respiratory program of revival popularly branded as “the aerobics of Jesus.” *Pneuma* – the Greek term for air, breath, and spirit – is central to this aerobic program, whose goal is to

labor on the athletic elasticity of spirit. Tracing the rhetoric, gestures, and spaces that together constitute this new theological community, de Abreu exposes the articulating forces among evangelical Christianity, neoliberal logics, and the rise of right-wing politics. By calling attention to how an ethics of pauperism vitally intersects with the neoliberal ethos of flexibility, de Abreu shows how paradoxes do not hinder but expand the Charismatic gymnasium. The result, de Abreu demonstrates, is the production of a fluid form of totalitarianism and Christianity in Brazil and beyond.

Meadows, Ruthie: *Efficacy of Sound. Power, Potency, and Promise in the Translocal Ritual Music of Cuban Ifá-Òriṣà.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2023. 238 pp. ISBN 978-0-226-82895-4. (pbk)

Hailing from Cuba, Nigeria, and various sites across Latin America and the Caribbean, Ifá missionary-practitioners are transforming the landscape of Ifá divination and deity (*òriṣà/ori-cha*) worship through transatlantic travel and reconnection. In Cuba, where Ifá and Santería emerged as an interrelated, Yorùbá-inspired ritual complex, worshippers are driven to “African traditionalism” by its promise of efficacy: they find Yorùbá approaches more powerful, potent, and efficacious.

In the first book-length study on music and Ifá, Ruthie Meadows draws on extensive, multi-sited fieldwork in Cuba and Yorùbáland, Nigeria, to examine the contentious “Nigerian-style” ritual movement in Cuban Ifá divination. Meadows uses feminist and queer of color theory along with critical studies of Africanity to excavate the relation between utility and affect within translocal ritual music circulations. Meadows traces how translocal Ifá priestesses (*iyánífá*), female batá drummers (*bataleras*), and priests (*babaláwo*) harness Yorùbá-centric approaches to ritual music and sound to heighten efficacy, achieve desired ritual outcomes, and reshape the conditions of their lives. Within a contentious religious landscape marked by the idiosyncrasies of revolutionary state policy, Nigerian-style Ifá-Òriṣà is leveraged to transform femininity and masculinity, state religious policy, and transatlantic ritual authority on the island.

Pooley, Thomas M.: *The Land is Sung. Zulu Performances and the Politics of Place.* Middle-

town, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2023. 268+XVIII pp., ills and maps. ISBN 978-0-819-500588. (pbk)

In “The Land is Sung”, Thomas M. Pooley shows how performances of song, dance, and praise poetry connect Zulu communities to their ancestral homes and genealogies. The dynamics of governance and tradition are explored in studies of rural and migrant communities in the midlands and borderlands of South Africa. Pooley theorizes the politics of performance through a series of critical interventions in postcolonial debates on land, identity, language, education, and environmental ethics. [back-cover description]

Veit Erlmann: “Music, he [Pooley] argues, is inextricably intertwined with the heady debates about governance, justice, ethics, community, land ownership, and genealogy that have defined the northeastern edges of the province of Kwazulu-Natal for centuries and that continue to both divide and unite its inhabitants.”

Paustian, Megan Cole: *Humanitarian Fictions: Africa, Altruism, and the Narrative Imagination*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2024. 276 pp. ISBN 978-1531-505486.

Humanitarianism has a narrative problem. Far too often, aid to Africa is envisioned through a tale of Western heroes saving African sufferers. While labeling white saviour narratives has become a familiar gesture, it doesn’t tell us much about the story as story. “Humanitarian Fictions” aims to understand the working of humanitarian literature, as they engage with and critique narratives of Africa.

Overlapping with but distinct from human rights, humanitarianism centers on a relationship of assistance, focusing less on rights than on needs, less on legal frameworks than moral ones, less on the problem than on the nonstate solution. Tracing the white savior narrative back to religious missionaries of the nineteenth century, “Humanitarian Fictions” reveals the influence of religious thought on seemingly secular institutions and uncovers a spiritual, collectivist streak in the discourse of humanity.

Because the humanitarian model of care transcends the boundaries of the state, and its networks touch much of the globe, Humanitarian Fictions redraws the boundaries of literary classification based on a shared problem space

rather than a shared national space. The book maps a transnational vein of Anglophone literature about Africa that features missionaries, humanitarians, and their so-called beneficiaries. Putting humanitarian thought in conversation with postcolonial critique, this book brings together African, British and US writers typically read within separate traditions. Paustian shows how the novel – with its profound sensitivity to narrative – can enrich the critique of white saviorism while also imagining alternatives that give African agency its due. [back-cover description]

Ngwa, Kenneth N., Aliou Cissé Niang, and Arthur Pressley (eds.): *Life under the Baobab Tree. Africana Studies and Religion in a Transitional Age*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2023. 432+XII pp. ISBN 978-1531-502973. (pbk)

The volume appeared in the series “Transdisciplinary Theological Colloquia” edited by Catherine Keller who also wrote the “Afterword” to this volume. The book is divided into three parts: I. Un/folding identities; II. Africana Activism; III. Africana Historiographies and Memories.

“Life under the Baobab Tree” is a compendium of innovating essays meticulously written by early and later diasporic people of African descent. Their speech arises from the depth of their experiences under the Baobab tree and offers to the world voices of resilience, newness, resurrection, hope, and life. Resolutely journeying on the trails of their ancestors, they speak about setbacks and forward-looking movements of liberation, social transformation, and community formation. The volume is a carefully woven conversation of intellectual substance and structure across time, space, and spirituality that is quintessentially ‘Africana’ in its centering of methodological, theoretical, epistemological, and hermeneutical complexity that assumes nonlinear and dialogical approaches to developing liberating epistemologies in the face of imperialism, colonialism, racism, and religious intolerance. [back-cover description]

Schindwein, Simone: *Der grüne Krieg. Wie in Afrika die Natur auf Kosten der Menschen geschützt wird – und was der Westen damit zu tun hat*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2023. 256 pp. ISBN 978-3-7425-1040-2. (pbk)

Natur- und Artenschutz klingen per se anstrengenswert, doch dürfen zu diesem Zweck Menschen vertrieben, verletzt oder gar ermordet werden? Menschenrechtsverletzungen im Zusammenhang mit Naturschutzmaßnahmen häufen sich, gerade auch durch die kriegerische Ausbildung und Aufrüstung von Wildhütern in afrikanischen Schutzgebieten. Simone Schlindwein zeigt auf, wie westliche Regierungen und Firmen die Schutzmaßnahmen finanzierten, um ihre selbst definierten Ziele des Klima- und Artenschutzes zu erreichen, und dabei das Prinzip der menschenleeren, militärisch geschützten Naturparks förderten – zum Teil betrieben von privatwirtschaftlichen, gewinnorientierten Akteuren. Lokale Bevölkerungsgruppen, die jahrtausendlang in den Wäldern gelebt und für ihre Subsistenz gejagt und Pflanzen gesammelt haben, würden aus ihnen verbannt und pauschal als Wilderer gebrandmarkt und verfolgt. Zugleich werde wohlhabenden Europäern, Amerikanern oder Arabern die Großwildjagd in beinahe menschenleeren Naturschutzgebieten gestattet und damit eine koloniale Praxis fortgeführt. Während die indigenen Gruppen kaum Möglichkeiten hätten, ihre Menschen- und Landrechte zu verteidigen, werde in oder nahe den Schutzgebieten die Rohstoffförderung durch internationale Konzerne zugelassen. Diese Schieflage dürfte sich, so Schlindwein, durch die geplante Ausdehnung der Schutzgebiete bis zum Jahr 2030 auf insgesamt 30 Prozent der Erdoberfläche noch weiter verschärfen. [Beschreibung auf dem Rückumschlag]

Sounaye, Abdoulaye and Frédéric Madore (eds.): *Religiosity on University Campuses in Africa. Trends and Experiences*. Berlin: LIT Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2023. 312 pp. ISBN 978-3-643-91429-3. (pbk)

This volume examines religiosity on university campuses in Sub-Saharan Africa. Focusing on both individuals and organized groups, the contributors open a window onto how religion becomes a factor, affects social interactions, is experienced and mobilized by various actors. It brings together case studies from various disciplinary backgrounds (anthropology, sociology, history, religious studies, literature) and theoretical orientations to illustrate the significance of religiosity in recent developments on university campuses. It pays a particular attention to religion-informed activism and contributes a fresh analysis of processes that are shaping both the experience of being student and the university campus as a moral space. Last but not least, it sheds light onto the ways in which the campus becomes a site of a reformulation of both religiosity and sociality. [back-cover description]

The volume contains ten contributions (four out of them in French) preceded by an introduction. Out of the contributions in English, two deal with the situation in Mbarara University of Science and Technology in south-western Uganda, and one each with the situation at the University of Buea in Molyko, Cameroon, on various university campuses in Ghana and on the campuses of Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Out of the French contributions, one deals with the situation at the University of Lomé, two with the situation at the Abdou Moumouni University in Niamey, Niger, and the last one with the situation on various university campuses in Ivory Coast. The contributors examine various Christian and Muslim organisations and movements, often in a comparative perspective.

Review of Articles

(by Darius Piwowarczyk, Alexius Dungdung and Stanisław Grodź)

Shah, Alpa: When Decolonization Is Hijacked. *American Anthropologist* 126/4.2024: 553–566. (Open Access) DOI:10.1111/aman.28021

This article asks how we should reconceptualize decolonization when it is hijacked for authoritarian forces. It focuses on the notorious Bhima Koregaon case in India in which 16 intellectuals and human rights defenders from across the country were imprisoned without trial as alleged terrorists. The “2018 Bhima Koregaon Case” refers to violence during an annual celebratory gathering on 1 January 2018 at Bhima Koregaon to mark the 200th anniversary of the 1818 battle of the same name. The battle is of importance for Dalits – the common term for the lowest groups in Hindu society, who are considered “untouchables” and “casteless” according to the religious-dogmatic distinction in Hinduism between ritually “pure” and “impure” social groups within the caste system. Since then (1818), on 1 January every year, Dalits gather at Bhima Koregaon to celebrate their victory against the upper caste regime of the Maratha Empire, whom they see as their oppressors. On 1 January, 2018 a mob from Vadhu Badruk area attacked the Dalits who were going to attend the annual meeting around the Vijay Stambh. Dalit organizations blocked roads and started demonstrations across Maharashtra. Violence was reported across Pune – a 16-year-old boy was killed during the violence.

The violence and its legal consequences show how, on the one hand, decolonization is hijacked by the Hindu authoritarian regime and, on the other hand, colonial artifacts are resymbolized by the colonized to oppose oppression by native elites. It urges attention to the questions of who is mobilizing the language of decolonization and why. It argues that the most important anti-colonial intellectuals may not use the language of decolonization and may not be in the universities, but on the streets, with social movements and in prison. It proposes that contemporary decolonization debates center processes of domination and oppression created by the state and global capital nexus processes that re cultural, psychological, political, and economic. These processes are shown to entrench casteist/racist

hierarchies, work through Indigenous elites, and create internal differentiation within marginalized communities, eschewing a unitary concept of indigenous ontology, cosmopolitics, and worldviews. Calls for an emancipatory politics, such as that of decolonizing anthropology or the university, would be well placed to center these global processes and local nuances.

Modragón-Celis, Agnes: The Problem of Criminal Charisma. State Authority and the Politics of *Narcocultura* in Mexico’s Drug War. *American Anthropologist* 126/4.2024: 581–595. DOI:10.1111/aman.28024

As spaces like the “Museum of Drugs” in Mexico City that the author visited in the process of working on this article articulate the Mexican state’s relation to criminality amid the drug war, they confront the same problem: how to deal with the charisma of the drug trafficking world emanated by *narcocultura*. Acknowledging its power, the state has incorporated representations of criminality into its rituals of self-representation, attempting to mobilize them through indexical operations. Despite its efforts, containing or resignifying drug traffickers’ charisma has proven to be inevitably flawed. In this article, she analyzes such failure as a symptom of a more profound political conundrum for state authority. The problem posed by organized crime’s charisma results less from publics’ porosity to affective enticements than from the meanings and forms of valuation contained and projected by *narcocultura*. More than a mass-cultural phenomenon, *narcocultura* articulates a political project that endows certain practices and identities with value-including ideas around access to capitalist consumption, upward mobility, and social justice – thereby doubling and mimicking the state’s political project. Just like state authority is largely constituted through imaginations, *narcocultura* constructs the drug world through fantasies of wealth, empowerment, and violence. Moreover, its charisma sustains and reveals its successful articulation of “the people” around it. This charisma is a key element that constitutes organized crime as a political actor, which menaces state authority not only by challenging its monopoly of violence but also by threatening the

permanence of its law – that is, the state’s capacity to organize citizens’ political and economic lives through its own principles

This article draws on author’s over 14 months of ethnographic research between 2016 and 2020 in and around Mexico City. During this time, she made three visits to the Secretariat of Defense’s Museum of Drugs, as well as the offices of and several auctions organized by the Institute to Give Back What Was Stolen from the People (Instituto para Devolver al Pueblo lo Robado, INDEP), where she interviewed and interacted with several of its employees and auction attendees. As part of a larger project on the intersection of knowledge production and political authority in Mexico, this piece also draws on extensive ethnographic research across other sites where the drug war, the state, and drug traffickers are the objects of public knowledge production and contestation, including street protests, meetings between public officials and journalists, workshops and conferences for journalists, and in/formal conversations with reporters producing factual and fictional work on or amid the drug war.

Lamrani, Myriam: The Ultimate Intimacy. Death and Mexico. An Anthropological Relation in Images. *American Ethnologist* 49/2.2022: 204–220. DOI:10.1111/amet.13075

Death – the image of the skeleton – has long been the symbol of a strong Mexican state. But, like most symbols, it has many faces. Nowhere is this more evident than in Oaxaca, where tourists flock to attend joyful Day of the Dead celebrations while the cult to La Santa Muerte, a sanctified death, is growing strong. Through the ethnographic lens of this image, the author approaches other representations of the slain body to reassess the country’s intimacy with death against a backdrop of the current, drug-related violence. This analysis unveils different scales of intimacies (from devotion to the nation), reckoning with how these images straddle the boundaries between politics, criminality, and religion. Ultimately, the author offers the concept of *transintimacy*, proposing that the *transintimate* collapses well-known anthropological dichotomies, for it is not only a feature of how people relate with these images, but it is also at the very heart of anthropology (the relation between the observer and the observed).

La Santa Muerte and photographs of the slain body.

What these images have in common, Lamrani suggests is that they operate on different scalar dimensions of intimacy that, together, articulate a changing collective understanding of death. She argues that not only death imagery is now part of a fixed landscape of terror feeding national self-termination – in other words, another kind of cultural intimacy – but also that its implications are far more complex. Moreover, the author intends to demonstrate that people engage with images of death at multiple levels of relatedness. These include popular religious rituals (e.g., the dyadic relationship of devotion, Day of the Dead), public protests, relational networks linking family and friends, other networks connecting people to the body politic and its “necropower,” and so on. These intimacies exist simultaneously. The concept of “transintimacy” offers a new theoretical apparatus that allows us to stabilize these scalar shifts without privileging any particular kind of closeness deemed “proper.” The term harnesses and mirrors the indeterminate nature of intimacy, helping us see how images move across scales and modes of relatedness; how, in so doing, they “move us,” and how they do so intimately.

She proposes the notion of “transintimacy” as an anthropological theory and as a method for studying images. The term designates manifold intimate domains through which the latter acquire meaning and the mobile processes of attachment that people deploy to engage with them. Rather than simply looking at how certain types of representations circulate and create meaning, the author has instead explored how they gain their significance through overlapping scalar dimensions of intimacy – devotional, relational, romantic, collective, and political. Moreover, this concept has ramifications beyond the study of images. The correspondence between modes of relatedness with images (an object of empirical ethnography), and transintimacy (a theoretical construct) also crystallizes the movement between the ethnographic field and the reflective practice of writing. Transintimacy is also wedded to anthropology’s preferred methodological tool, fieldwork. To talk of the “field of research” is to talk of an entity that is not merely spatial; it is as relational as intimacy. The field is thus transintimate, and so is our immersion in a cultural universe. Relationships in the field are similar to how our interlocutors negotiate distances and proximities, those “partial connections,” with their images. That is not to say that we acquire a native understanding of cultural intimacy or, for that matter, that

we become friends or family with our interlocutors. We merely invest in certain forms of closeness. Some remain forever out of reach. Visual and verbal variations on the theme of death do not only expose Mexicans' intimacy with images of death, but they also reveal the intricate ways that these representations are transposed onto all sorts of social relationships. They are not confined to a single sphere of sociality – or to a single meaning – for they impinge on the interlocutors' lives at many different levels.

Observing how these intimacies overlap, we begin to understand how a devotional image can belong to contradicting spheres of familiarity and how a faceless skull, to dreadful to be pictured, can be turned into a collective archetype representing the thousands of dead lying in unmarked graves. To appreciate intimacy's staying power in anthropology in relation to the looming possibility of death, one need only look at the growing COVID-era literature that considers it through multiscalar approaches (e.g., heteronormative and queer relationships intimacy with the state, with viruses, or with God and other deities). Instead of understanding these forms of closeness as discrete entities, we should embrace the idea that in relating to viruses, deaths, and images, people deploy different intimate modalities of attachment at various levels of their social lives.

Schien, Stefanie: Of Huts and Houses. Negotiating Authenticity and Indigeneity in a Shuar Development Project in the Ecuadorian Amazon. *Indiana* 41/1.2024: 25–43. (Open Access) DOI:10.18441/ind.v41i1.25-43

How do tourists and Shuar project staff understand, negotiate and contest notions of authenticity and Indigeneity in the context of volunteer tourism? In this article Schien examines infrastructure as a privileged site for projections of authenticity and Indigeneity in an Indigenous tourism project in the Ecuadorian Amazon. While referring to the same physical infrastructure and services, such as running water, electricity, sanitary installations, houses and roads, for voluntourists and Shuar it represents divergent visions of Indigenous life. A focus on the mundane reality of infrastructure lends itself to teasing out differing yet intersecting notions of authenticity and Indigeneity as negotiated and contested in the Indigenous volunteer tourism project, while further highlighting how an anthropological perspective can add

hosts' visions and perspectives to the discourse in volunteer tourism studies.

In this article Schien examines, therefore, how the physical infrastructure in the Shuar developmental project, such as houses, access to water and electricity, the proximity to roads and sanitary installations, is the object of projection to both voluntourists and Shuar. The former negotiate infrastructure as an index of authenticity. On the one hand, a hut becomes a house: Based on an essentializing notion of authenticity, the changes in infrastructure indicate a deviation from a previous primordial state of originality and the beginning of an irrevocable progression towards a unifying global modernity and consequently the loss of authenticity. On the other hand, a house becomes a hut in the voluntourists' othering narrative of the material reality of the community. In this framing the infrastructural simplicity works as a positive index for authenticity. The recourse to "primordial authenticity" and "authenticity as distinction" on part of the voluntourists also points to multiple overlapping notions of authenticity simultaneously in place. However, none of these approaches to authenticity and infrastructure is an end in itself; rather they expose the desire to mold their experience as a resource for distinction. This self-referential perspective on infrastructure in effect shifts the focus from the Indigenous communities' needs to the voluntourists' desire, thereby depoliticizing not only volunteer tourism but the encounters in which it is embedded. This reveals a power relation in which one party can afford to oversee the broader nexus of relations in which infrastructure exists in an Indigenous community in the Amazon and, on a global scale, the historical and contemporary processes that contribute to structural inequality. It is the very opposite for the Shuar. To them infrastructure encodes a different yet intersecting vision of Indigenous life, one of continuation as contestation and resistance. While they are aware of and strategically deal with expectations of authenticity, as the example of the museum project has shown, their project is an intrinsically political one. Since the appearance of State initiated infrastructure, it has become a symbol of infringement and loss of Indigenous life. This is particularly poignant in the *ciudades del milenio* which the Shuar and other Indigenous groups of the Ecuadorian Amazon perceive as a plan for acculturation and extinction of Indigenous life in the age of fossil fuel extraction. In the light of infrastructure as a means of persuasion, to the

Shuar of Arútam therefore maintaining their own infrastructure and running a tourism project amounts to maintaining autonomy as Indigenous peoples.

Whether seen as huts or houses, in the spirit of Claude Levi-Strauss, infrastructure is good to think with. By tracing power relations in this ethnographic case, it is possible to tease out the semiotic charging of material things as indexes for wider processes in which these relations are embedded. Here, infrastructure allows us to grasp one particular configuration, which refers to visions of Indigenous life in the Ecuadorian rainforest as seen from a local, national and global level. It also points us to the potentiality of an anthropological perspective on volunteer tourism, countering a singular focus on discourses of voluntourists and their desire for authenticity, and thereby erasing host communities' intentionality and agency. However, in the light of the more recent and ongoing crisis due to the conflicts with – and infiltration through – criminal structures of the international and national drug trafficking in Ecuador, the effect of the changed security situation on the national tourism economy and small projects like Arútam as well as the impact on the relationship between the state and the Shuar remain to be seen.

Hagler, Anderson: Accessing the Divine: Indigenous Medical Specialists, Catholic Priests, and Nonorthodox Methods of Healing in Colonial Mexico. *Ethnohistory* 71/1.2024: 27–45. DOI:10.1215/00141801-10887989.

ABSTRACT: This study examines forty-six colonial records spanning over two centuries (ca. 1581–1802), the majority of which consist of Mexican Inquisition and criminal trials. The article illuminates how Indigenous medical specialists, alternatively labelled ritual specialists, maintained communal solidarity by accessing the divine using sacred rituals. From New Spain's southern extremity in Chiapas to its northern frontier in Santa Fe, devout commoners made votive offerings to combat disease and recalibrate the cosmos. Indigenous medical specialists such as *curanderos* and midwives remained influential locally because commoners perceived their ceremonies to be efficacious. Ritual specialists used their advanced knowledge of medicine and spirituality to alleviate illnesses like dysentery, fever, and typhoid. Concern for ailing family members prompted Natives to take an inclusive approach

to the treatment of disease, which could conflict with church doctrine. Case testimony reveals that diverse, nonorthodox methods of healing persisted in the face of Spanish colonization. Faith in the efficacy of Indigenous cosmologies helped the infirm to envisage a better life, instilling hope. The study's focus on the spiritual and material illuminates how ancestral knowledge produced political and social ramifications centuries after inception, demonstrating how the past reverberates into the present.

Lidola, Maria: Affective Relatedness, Temporalities, and the Politics of Care in a Medical South-South Partnership: The Cuban Mission in Brazil. *Focaal. Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 2024/98: 31–46. **(Open Access)** DOI:10.3167/fcl.2024.980103.

ABSTRACT: For more than 50 years, Cuba has been one of the most important players in the field of international medical care in the Global South. Between 2013 and 2018, Cuba sent nearly 18,000 Cuban health professionals to Brazil within the framework of the More Doctors Program to assist during the Brazilian public health care system's state of emergency. This article focuses on local encounters and emergent socialities between Cuban physicians and Brazilian patients and medical staff. Their sensitive moments of interaction – with their embodied, emplaced, and political dimensions of past and present – hold the possibility of a fragile intersubjectivity that creates its own temporal and affective dynamics, undermining, for a moment, the prevalent care regimes.

Thompson, Warren: Being Seen Is Believing: Evidence and Authority in the Ache Mission Encounter. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 80/1.2024: 35–56. DOI:10.1086/728314

ABSTRACT: Like many other lowland South American groups described in the literature, Ache give a higher epistemic value to visually experiencing events, a sensibility that some have argued has impeded lasting conversions by Amerindians to Christianity given that the evidentiary practices of the latter can only be expressed through language. In this article, I qualify this idea by showing how the Ache acceptance of the idea of “being seen” by an omnipresent Christian God was able to reconfigure Ache evidentiary practices regarding vision and visual experience. Through a series of Ache conversion narratives recorded in the late 1970s,

I show the importance of “being seen” in Ache conversion and how it eventually provided resources for lasting engagements with Christianity – both with and without the surveying practices of missionaries from the New Tribes Mission.

Cury, Marilia Xavier: ‘Indigenous Encyclopedias’: Displacements and the Repositioning of Logics, Voices and Narratives in the Relationship between Museums and Indigenous Groups (Brazil). *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie ZFE | JSC Journal of Social and Cultural Anthropology* 148/2.2023: 211–231. (Open Access) DOI:10.60827/zfe/jasca.v148i2.1295.

ABSTRACT: This article seeks to bring value to the claims of Indigenous Peoples in Brazil through ‘encyclopedias’, libraries or dictionaries, forms of expression that indicate respect for elders and ancestors. It is developed within the political context of a struggle for constitutional rights, where land rights are at the center of complex historical issues marked by violence and violations. It recognizes the role of museums as active agents, especially with respect to collaborative actions in which indigenous groups and their representative agencies directly participate in museum actions with their ancestors’ objects. A collaborative experience is described in relation to the exhibition *Resistência Já! Strengthening and Unity of Indigenous Cultures – Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa and Terena*, MAE-USP. Throughout the discussion, reflections on museal collaboration are raised and indigenous authors embedded with the aim of expanding the point of view of museums and their working methods with comprehensive and active indigenous participation. The position of indigenous actors on cultural knowledge transmission and the elders’ role results in an increased political appreciation of the ‘encyclopedias’.

Gerhards, Jürgen, Lukas Antoine and Rasmus Ollroge: The Distinction between Refugees and Immigrants: Philosophical Arguments, International Law, and Citizens’ Attitudes in 26 Countries. *Comparative Sociology* 23/5.2024: 615–650. DOI:10.1163/15691330-bja10120. (Open Access)

A short summary: In the 1960s, the number of international migrants has increased. This phenomenon is viewed, discussed and debated from different perspectives. While the international

law obliges the countries to take refugees, nationalistic thinkers state that they have right to restrict immigrations. The scholars also try to distinguish between refugees and voluntary migrants but, apparently, that distinction is hardly ever considered by ordinary citizens. An individual person has the right to self-determination, at the same time the nations have their own rights to safeguard their own country. There is also the idea of social justice and equal opportunities. The country of one’s birth is determined by chance and not by choice. Hence a person’s right to migrate to another country should be guaranteed in order to realise equal opportunities. Weighing all these arguments, the international law states that when a person’s life is in danger in the wake of war, such a person should be accepted as a refugee.

Venkatesan, Soumhya et al.: A decolonial anthropology: You can dismantle the master’s house with the master’s tools. *Critique of Anthropology* 44/2.2024: 99–140. (Open Access) DOI:10.1177/0308275X241253373.

ABSTRACT: The 2022 meeting of the Group for Debates in Anthropological Theory (GDAT) Social Anthropology, University of Manchester. The motion is, of course, a riff on Audre Lorde’s well-known 1984 claim that ‘the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.’ Lorde is asking about the tools of a racist and constitutionally exclusionary world, but we can ask similar questions about the tools of an academic discipline, anthropology, which arose during the height of empire, and the house that anthropology has built and its location in the university. Are anthropology’s tools able to dismantle a house built on oppression, exploitation and discrimination and then build a different better house? If not, then what kinds of other tools might we use, and what is it that we might want to build? The motion is proposed by David Mills and Mwenda Ntarangwi and opposed by Kelly Gillespie and Naisargi Davé with Soumhya Venkatesan convening and editing the debate for publication.

Vencatsamy, Beverly: The world religions paradigm: Why context matters in religious studies. *Critical Research on Religion*, 12/1.2024): 12–25. DOI:10.1177/20503032241226966 (Open Access)

“Conclusion. This article critiques the World Religions Paradigm (WRP) as an inappropriate framework for the introductory Religious Studies course in the current South African student context. The WRP continues to assertively rely on Eurocentric assumptions, perpetuating colonial mindsets and overlooking the rich diversity and complexity of non-Christian, non-Western, and non-White religious traditions. As a result, students are ill-prepared for higher education and struggle to make genuine comparisons among religions. The WRP’s dominance in the curriculum stifles critical thinking and intercultural understanding while cementing Christianity as the benchmark for assessments of religions. To address these issues, a pedagogical revolution is needed – one that embraces diversity, inclusivity, and decolonization. The education landscape can be transformed by challenging the dominant narratives, confronting biases, and empowering students to engage with religion on their terms. This approach will liberate students from the shackles of colonial relics and enable them to navigate the complexities of religion with curiosity and genuine appreciation for the richness of human spiritual expression. Developing the Religious Studies curricula should acknowledge the social, economic, and political factors shaping students’ lives. Thoughtlessly applying Western-centric paradigms like the WRP disregards these unique demands, perpetuating an oppressive status quo and marginalizing non-Western religious practices. To foster intellectual and spiritual freedom, it is essential to dismantle the archaic and harmful paradigm and embrace an educational approach that truly respects diversity and promotes critical thinking. Embracing contextual dynamics in the curriculum will pave the way for a transformative educational experience that respects and complements the richness of religious expressions and experiences in the South African context.”

Baracchini, Leila: Becoming Traditional: Contemporary *San* Art and the Production of (Non-)Knowledge. *Ethnography* 25/2.2024: 187–207. DOI:10.1177/1466138120983845.

ABSTRACT: The contribution of arts for development has recently received a great deal of attention from international donors and organizations. The anthropology of art, however, has participated in a limited way in these debates. Borrowing theoretical tools from the socio-

anthropology of development, this paper questions the politics of knowledge involved in the implementation of art projects in postcolonial context. Drawing on ethnographical research in Botswana on an art project opened by a NGO for the San people, it describes the ways areas of knowledge and non-knowledge have been attributed. It shows that the conceptions of knowledge at stake in the making of contemporary San art indirectly reproduce a Great Divide between modernity and tradition, which has direct impacts on the ways the practice is appropriated by local actors.

Williams, Dodeye, Abimbola Adelokun, and Nike Ogunnowo: Religion, Science, and Pentecostalism: RCCG and the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 54/2.2024: 121–141. DOI:10.1163/15700666-12340297.

ABSTRACT: The COVID-19 pandemic flustered dimensions of public and private life in varied ways. In Nigeria, as in several parts of the world, faith-based groups variously tried to make sense of the event as they also try to cope with government ‘lockdown’ measures introduced to contain and limit the spread of the virus. This study focuses on the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), one of the largest megachurches within global religious landscapes. The study compares the narratives birthed within the RCCG to what obtained among other Pentecostal denominational leaders to make sense of the pandemic as everyone confronted a befuddling global event. Both science and religion became instruments of discerning the meaning of the pandemic, sometimes as competing and sometimes reconciled.

Pontzen, Benedict: Secular Framings: The State and ‘African Traditional Religion’ in Ghana. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 54/3.2024: 301–325. DOI:10.1163/15700666-12340292.

The article is one of the six contributions in the Special Issue “Multiple Secularities in Africa”. The Author declares (pp. 304–5): “This article is an ethnographic contribution to rethink the secular from Africa. It traces secularization processes and their social dynamics in Ghana by investigating how the Ghanaian state has come to frame traditional religious presences in the country and considering how traditional religious actors have become involved in these processes. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, archival research as well as online research, and

reading of the literature, sketches of the state's main framings of traditional religious presences in the country are collated and the social and cultural dynamics of these framings are discussed. Conjoining framing theories with secularity studies framings are considered as central devices in secular processes of differentiation and the concomitant construction of a secular reality. In religiously plural Ghana, where endogenous religious traditions, Islam, and Christianity are co-present, such processes not only involve traditional religious actors and the Ghanaian state, but also Christian and Muslim spokespersons who ardently criticize and campaign against traditional religious presences.”

ABSTRACT: The secular Ghanaian state frames and governs ‘African Traditional Religion’ (‘ATR’) in three main ways. As culture and heritage, aspects of ‘ATR’ are integrated into public performances and national narratives, displaying the African identity of the Ghanaian nation. As providers of traditional forms of therapy, traditional shrines are administered as health facilities and supervised by the Ministry of Health. As religion, ‘ATR’ is counted as one of the country’s religions. This article discusses these framings and their social dynamics drawing on framing theories and secularity studies. Devising secular framings and eclectically appropriating traditional religious presences, the Ghanaian state seeks to govern ‘ATR’ and integrate it into its nation-building politics. Traditional religious actors have reappropriated these framings, carving out spaces of their own. The relations between ‘ATR’ and the Ghanaian state are subject to constant negotiations that impact both.

Wilkins, Katharina: African Socialism and Secular State Formation. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 54/3.2024: 326-356. DOI:10.1163/15700666-12340316.

ABSTRACT: In order to trace pathways of secularisation and secularity in Africa this paper highlights a particular movement that carried great ideological weight at the time of most countries’ independence in the 1950s and 60s, namely African socialism. The development toward state secularism was structurally very similar throughout the continent independently of whether political leaders opted for the ‘West’ or the ‘East’ in the cold war. However, in opposition to Soviet ideology, African Socialism was

famously antiatheist. With the wish to fend off Marxist atheism as a supposedly necessary aspect of socialism, ideologues in African socialism were among the few politicians in Africa even to address the place of religion in a secular state at all. The roots of African socialism can be traced to US-American Pan-Africanism as well as the interconnected colonial opposition movement grounded in Marxist anti-imperialism. Another argument focusses on the education of some prominent state leaders, such as Nyerere, Nkrumah, Touré and Senghor, to explain the importance of Christian mission schools and Islamic madrasahs as points of access to social, intellectual, and institutional participation in global anti-colonial movements. In the framework of one-party politics, state leaders called on (Pan-)African traditions, but ‘demystified’ them (Touré) in order to enhance African Socialism ‘as belief’ (Nyerere). In conclusion it is argued that state secularism in Africa at the time of independence, as demonstrated most visibly in African Socialism, is more about suppressing and/or balancing the traditional powers of religious leaders than about a fundamental critique of a religious way of life. In turn, the implicit association of socialism and Marxism with atheism needs further scrutiny in a global perspective.

Lasco, Gideon and Jhaki Mendoza: Deciphering a Non-meal: *Pantawid-Gutom* and the Everyday Negotiation of Hunger in the Philippines. *Cultural Anthropology* 39/2.2024: 171–193. DOI:10.14506/ca39.2.02. (**Open Access**)

ABSTRACT: *Pantawid-gutom* literally means “to bridge hunger” and refers to a range of food and non-food products and practices in the Philippines that allow people to survive in between “serious meals.” What does its existence as a liminal category between food/non-food or serious/non-serious meal signify, particularly for millions of Filipino families who regularly experience hunger? Drawing on fieldwork in low-income urban communities on Luzon Island, and from a review of the scholarly and popular literature, we use local conceptions of *pantawid-gutom* – hitherto overlooked in the scholarship – as a starting point for exploring the lived reality of food insecurity in the country. The efficacy of *pantawid-gutom*, we argue, is both material and symbolic, providing temporary relief from the feeling of hunger and allowing people to suspend their ideas of what is good to eat

while maintaining the hope that their socioeconomic predicament is something bridgeable.

Raietparvar, Ana Maria Gomes: Islam as the Problem, Christianity as the Solution. *Anthropology of the Middle East* 19/1.2024: 86–103. (Open Access) DOI:10.3167/ame.2024.190106.

ABSTRACT: This article analyses Christian missionaries working on converting Muslim Iranians to Christianity. Their methods are based on a logic of rupture and discontinuity with Islam, presenting Christianity as the solution to a moral-political crisis of Iranians in the Islamic Republic. Anti-Islam is the focus of this conversion discourse. In a transnational Christian network formed by Iranians and non-Iranians, the evangelical missionaries work with methodology that breaks and dialogues with society and the local culture of their target audience, presenting evangelical Christianity as an alternative for Iranians. This research was carried out based on participant observation in missionary groups and Christian churches for Iranians, via digital media and face-to-face, contributing to the understanding of the conversion of Muslims to evangelical Christianity.

Basant, P.K.: The Idea of Madhyadeśa in Early India: History of a Region's Identity. *Asian Ethnology* 83/1.2024: 61–86. (Open Access) <https://asianethnology.org/articles/2456>

A short summary: In the article, the author traces the idea of Madhyadeśa (Middle Country) in Indian history. He does it with reference to the Brahmanical texts. The Buddhist texts do not exactly match the Brahmanical texts. The earliest references to the territorial identities covering the area are found in *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*. The people of this area claimed to have followed the so-called culture makers. They were contrasted with the people of Mlecchadeśa (Land of Barbarians). This gave rise to the birth of *varṇa* system, translated as caste system. Thus, the Hindu society is divided into Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, Sūdra, and additional groups like the Mlecchas, Caṇḍālas, and Niśādās. It is interesting to note that even the form of greetings of members of one caste with the other was strictly formulated and followed. The authors of both the Brahmanical and Buddhist texts depicted these people as cultured and civilized because they conducted themselves in accordance with *dharma* (the code of conduct that ensures success in this life and the next

one). The ideas of purity and pollution prescribed for different castes are the most visible elements of the *varṇa* and *jāti* system.

Goel, Yukta and Shefali Mishra: Cultural understandings of fathering and fatherhood in India: An exploration of lived experiences. *Culture & Psychology* 30/2.2024: 245–278. DOI:10.1177/1354067X231154006.

ABSTRACT: Conceptualization of fathers as an essential begetter survives within and through their relationship in family through ages. However, within and behind this word, a social-construct, the journey of fathers remains non-located in researches on parenting in India. Thus, this study aims to develop an indigenous conceptualization of fatherhood in the cultural realm of India from father's and child's perspective. Carried out in eight two-child families in Delhi, the study is done through semi-structured interviews with fathers and Draw and tell method with their elder child (7–11 years). Thematic analysis of both father's and children's narratives helped create seven themes within each. The themes from father's narratives include multiple shades of "father", "being a father": a world within, learnings about 'being a father', father as enablers of child's 'becoming', picturing 'ideal' fathers, cultural mountings and 'cultures' of fatherhood. The themes obtained from children's narratives include father as a playtime partner, inspiring figure, mainstay, shield, involved, not-so-involved. Viewed holistically, this study holds implications for parenting practices and policy makers in positive direction.

Bala, Anjana: Divine trauma: Schizophrenia and unresolved realities in South India. *Ethos* 52/1.2024: 3–19. DOI:10.1111/etho.12412. (Open Access)

ABSTRACT: This article explores the relationship between schizophrenia, divine encounters, and therapeutics based on ethnographic research in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. Contributing to a long history of single-subject ethnographies in psychological anthropology, this article narrates the events leading up to the diagnosis and the emerging life worlds post-diagnosis of an interlocutor I call Dhruv. I depart from symbolic constructions of the divine to an affective divine, a kind of force that enters and alters embodied existence. Following scholars who call for theories that move beyond Western metro-

politan epistemologies, I draw upon the Bhagavad Gita, a poetic scripture from the Hindu tradition, as a form of psychological theory to contend how an encounter with the divine might be too much to bear, even traumatic. In doing so, the article offers an alternative entry point to the commonly held assumption of the therapeutic efficacy of divine encounters and religious sites in India.

Ramadhan, Febi R.: Of Agency, Allah, and Authority: The Making of a Divine Trial among Muslims with Same-Sex Attraction in Indonesia. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 30/1.2024: 150–167. (Open Access) DOI:10.1111/1467-9655.14053.

ABSTRACT: This article delves into the life stories of Indonesian Muslims who struggle with same-sex attraction (henceforth SSA) and believe that their SSA is divinely foreordained as a test from Allah. I draw on seventeen months of ethnographic research in an online community called Yayasan Peduli Sahabat (henceforth YPS) which prescribes ways to live heterosexually to its members and clients with SSA. In this article, I argue that the members of YPS are exercising their agency when they try to discipline their sexuality and live as heterosexuals. In this way, this study contributes to the existing literature on the agency of illiberal religious subjects by discussing the extent to which agency is practised in the face of one's relations with the divine and human-mediated religious authority. Drawing on these interrelated themes, this article joins anthropological scholarship on self-cultivation, divine intervention, and religious authority. Instead of understanding Muslims' lives through the shift from a self-cultivation paradigm to the paradigm of divine intervention, I suggest that both paradigms are instructive and attending to them could elucidate how Muslims with SSA exercise their agency while continuing to be affected by the divine.

Larson, Erica M.: Smartphones and the Education of Religious Youth in Indonesia: Highway to Hell or Path of Righteousness? *Social Compass* 71/1.2024: 119–135. DOI:10.1177/00377686231182251.

ABSTRACT: Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in secondary schools in Manado, Indonesia, this article examines digital infrastructures and their accompanying (im)moral potentialities in the development of Christian and Muslim

youth as evaluated by educators. On the one hand, smartphones are portrayed as portals to a globalizing world in which youth might succumb to negative influences (with a particular anxiety surrounding pornography) based on their perceived inchoate moral development and insufficiently strong religious foundation. On the other hand, these teachers and administrators recognize the potential that smartphones have to be used for deepening spiritual engagement, connection, and proselytization. This particular case study offers insights into the ways in which institutions charged with religious and moral development of youth seek to leverage rather than categorically reject mainstream culture, navigating the globalizing influences of the secular world toward the possibility of attaining a greater good.

Turk, Elizabeth: “Being Cultured”, Changing Culture: Public Health Messaging in COVID-Era Ulaanbaatar. *Curare* 46/1.2023: 31–45.

A short summary: The author marks significant health consciousness after COVID-19 era, in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's capital city. Such slogans and campaigns as “Let's make the city cultured”, “A cultured city is lovely” and “Being cultured” sent clear messages to the citizens for cleanliness and health. The slogans were directly linked to specific behaviour such as urinating, defecating, and spitting in public. These were taken on seriously in health-related discourses. This paved way of “being cultured” in the sense of embracing the sophisticated, educated and normative assumptions about culture. The idea is further carried by the young people by improving their behaviour in society concretely by not littering, not spitting in public and adhering to traffic rules. The cultural and attitudinal change is also seen in the countryside. Moreover, the state promoted hygiene, health, and cleanliness in an effort to transform daily routines, habits, and way of thinking. The local cadres would tour and check these measures. When some defaulters were found they were punished. These habits were made compulsory at schools, too. They ushered in a cultured mode of living. Finally, “being cultured” resulted in being educated, upholding one's civic duty, and engaging in safe and healthy daily habits.

Whitehouse, Harvey: Rethinking ritual: how rituals made our world and how they could save it. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological*

The author aims “to describe how ritual has shaped the world we live in and how understanding this could change the ways in which we co-operate in the future.

All around the world and throughout known history, human beings have come together to dance, sing, chant, give thanks, mark changes in life, and celebrate communal achievements. These activities always entail the performance of special kinds of actions, often using unusual artefacts or displaying distinctive hairstyles, clothing, or body decorations. Each cultural group acts as a vast repository of unique rules for how to do these things.

It may be tempting to think of ritual behaviour as a strange quirk of human nature – a mere aesthetic frill adorning the more serious business of politics, religion, law, or any other aspect of human society. But nothing could be further from the truth. The rituals we perform and pass on have had massive consequences for human co-operation over the millennia, shaping and constraining the boundaries of the groups we belong to and the forms of co-operation they are able to demand of us. My goal is to present a generalizable theory of how ritual behaviour is acquired in childhood, how it motivates loyalty to groups in adulthood, and how it has contributed to the evolution of sociocultural complexity in world history. I argue that anthropological theories of ritual can be developed collaboratively through a cumulative process, in which each new body of research builds upon foundations laid by previous work. I will consider some of the implications of this for the way social science might evolve in the future and I will end by considering how our current understanding of ritual could help to address various practical problems facing the future of human society at large.” [...]

“To understand why we perform rituals at all, it is crucial to appreciate that they are not just causally opaque but irremediably so [...]. Instrumental actions are often causally opaque insofar as the underlying mechanisms are unknown – for example, you can start a car without understanding how turning the ignition key causes the engine to start – but in all such cases we assume that somebody (e.g. a car mechanic) understands the causal chain and could fix it if something went wrong. As such, the causal

opacity of an ignition system is resolvable and its mechanisms knowable. By contrast, when we perform a ritual, we assume that the actions take the form that they do, not because they contribute via ordinary causation to some desired outcome, but simply because this is the time-honoured and conventional procedure, as dictated by tradition or magical stipulation or doctrinal authority. For example, being tapped on the shoulders by a ceremonial sword may be considered necessary to turn a commoner into a knight but nobody believes that there is a knowable causal pathway that leads from action to outcome. The ritual uses of swords comprise actions that are a certain way simply because it is the conventional rule (e.g. the proper way of knighting someone) and not because it makes sense in terms of normal understandings of cause and effect in the physical world. The assumption that causal reasoning does not apply is essential to the idea of ritual. [...]

“Since rituals are irremediably causally opaque, they are also infinitely plastic. There is theoretically no limit to the range of possible procedural rules that could become conventionalized nor to the range of ways they could be combined or recombined, producing a great diversity of cultural traditions over time. All these attributes stem from just one: the assumption that certain behaviours – the ones we call rituals – have an unknowable causal structure. [...]

“Rituals also have another important consequence for our alignment with groups: they create social cohesion. Their capacity to do so is linked to one more key aspect of causal opacity which deserves special attention in its own right, namely the capacity to generate meaning. If an action is deemed to be irremediably causally opaque, it could, in theory, be accorded almost any conceivable meaning or exegesis. It is therefore unsurprising that rituals are subjected to widely varying interpretations, often linked to bodies of mythology and symbolism.”

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