Drittens kommt die Mehrheit der hier vertretenen Autor/inn/en kaum mit dem Umstand zurecht, dass das Thema dieses Bandes heute im Grunde nur mehr aus Diversitäten besteht. Die Herausgeber weisen zwar darauf hin, dass ihr Band explizit die "Außenpolitiken" arabischer Länder im Plural anspricht, aber ihre Argumentation verstrickt sich immer wieder in eine Rhetorik des Verlustes, der Nostalgie und der Remniszenz. Es gibt keine "arabische Außenpolitik" mehr, und diese Tatsache scheint aus guten Gründen historische Dauerhaftigkeit zu entwickeln. Einzig der beeindruckende Text von Paul Noble zieht daraus gründliche Konsequenzen: "From Arab System to Middle Eastern System?" Die Generationen der panarabischen Nationalisten haben ihre historischen Chancen gehabt und mit schmerzhaft hohem Aufwand vertan. Sofern "nation building" im arabischsprachigen Raum heute stattfindet, ereignet sich dies in weitaus kleineren Kontexten. Gerade die "Kleinen" – etwa im Jemen, in Kuwait, Bahrain, im Libanon und nicht zuletzt im "emerging state" Palästina – haben vom großarabischen (und stets sekulären) Pannationalismus mehr als genug. Politikwissenschaften, die damit nicht einverstanden sein wollen, leben offenbar in ihrer eigenen intellektuellen Welt und verlieren mancherlei wichtigen Bezug zur eigentlichen Realität. Auf die Dauer wird das nicht gut gehen. Früher oder später werden sie sich bescheiden und lernbereit um ein gleichberechtigtes Gespräch mit unserem Fach bemühen müssen, das als eines der wenigen lebensnahe Aufschlüsse zu "bottom-up"-Prozessen beizusteuern vermag. Andernfalls könnte altmodische politologische Selbstgenügsamkeit der hier besprochenen Art womöglich ins Aus führen. Fragen nach dem Einsparungspotenzial werden heutzutage bekanntlich recht rasch gestellt. Andre Gingrich

Larsen, Kjersti: Where Humans and Spirits Meet. The Politics of Rituals and Identified Spirits in Zanzibar. New York: Berghahn Books, 2008. 173 pp. ISBN 978-1-84545-055-7. (Social Identities, 5) Price: $ 85.00

This book is a localized study and interpretation of spirit possession in Zanzibar town, located on the larger of the two main islands that make up the semiautonomous polity of Zanzibar within the nation of Tanzania. Zanzibar is part of the Swahili cultural area that stretches along much of the East African coast. Larsen was very well-equipped to pursue this study, which was undertaken after prior periods of fieldwork in Zanzibar town which familiarized her with religious and social discourse as well as daily life and also introduced her to spirit possession. Her study of the Quran and her research on gender identity during this earlier fieldwork lays a strong basis for this subsequent study focused specifically on spirit possession. Larsen also notes that she was competent in the Swahili language from the outset of her fieldwork and thus never worked with an interpreter, which I find somewhat amazing since most nonlocal fieldworkers require some language assistance, at least to restate, slow down, or give added explanation at certain times in order to further understanding. Larsen, however, sees her lack of interpreters as allowing more natural and closer social interactions and conversations. No doubt Larsen's fluency increased over her various research periods in Zanzibar town as did her social network, and both greatly facilitated her research. One of the strengths of this book is Larsen's presentation of local Zanzibari views and perceptions, achieved through language fluency and immersion in Zanzibari social life.

The book itself is somewhat short with 157 pages of text, making it very manageable reading for advanced scholar and student alike. It starts with a concise overview of Zanzibar history and society including recent changes and then focuses on the multicultural nature of Zanzibari society, societal gender perceptions, and gender-related ritual expressions. Larsen then explores the Zanzibari spirit possession phenomenon itself: how Zanzibaris view spirits and possession; short case studies of spirit experiences, treatments, and relationships; and theoretical interpretations.

Many of Larsen's analytical points can be found in previously published literature on spirit possession on the Swahili coast and elsewhere during the last several decades. Like many others (e.g., Lambek 1981; Giles 1987; Boddy 1989; Sharp 1993), Larsen starts by noting the centrality and normalcy of spirit possession and the varied socioeconomic and gender categories of those involved, in contrast to I. M. Lewis' well-known theory of peripheral possession. Other scholars have also presented Larsen's main analytical themes of spirit possession as a vehicle for conceptualizing and articulating difference – i.e., distinctions between self and other on both the sociocultural and personal levels (cf. Boddy 1989; Kramer 1987/1993; Giles 1989, 1995) and revealing unarticulated contradictions (cf. Ardener 1972; Kapferer 1983; Giles 1989), often between societal ideals and lived experience (cf. Lambek 1981; Boddy 1989). In regard to Swahili spirit possession, Larsen's description of the various types of possessive spirits in Zanzibar town and her analysis of the cultural themes that they represent are very similar to my own work on spirit possession in Zanzibar and other Swahili sites. All of these noted similarities of data and interpretation among scholars (and especially fieldworkers), however, give added support and validation to one another, especially when arrived at independently. Larsen's book, therefore, is part of a growing literature on spirit possession that employs symbolic, expressive, and philosophical theoretical approaches that are firmly rooted in unique cultural contexts and yet share many strikingly similar interpretations.

Larsen's book differs from my own work on Swahili spirit possession by focusig wholly on Zanzibar town (cf. Nisula 1999) and much more on the intriguing and very distinctive *kibuki* (Malagasy) spirits. While her analysis is similar to mine in its exploration of how Swahili spirit possession reveals the multicultural nature and historical experience of Swahili society in various locales (in her case Zanzibar town in particular), she adds a thorough exploration of the relationship of spirits to the construction of gender (cf. Boddy's work on the Sudanese zar), explores how differences between spirits and humans

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highlights human ideals and experiences, and aptly incorporates recent theoretical work on mimesis, embodiment, and concepts of personhood. She thus offers an in-depth study of spirit possession in a specific localized context that is enriched by a complex and varied theoretical analysis.

Larsen's main focus in this book is how difference and sameness between humans and spirits, men and women, and the various *makabila* ("tribes" or ethnic identity) in the multicultural and sex-segregated society of Zanzibar town is expressed through the medium of spirit possession. Larsen shows how, during spirit possession, people's bodies become "the other" in terms of ethnic/tribal identity, gender, and accepted norms of society. She sees spirit possession as illuminating the social reality that gender, ethnicity, and behavioral norms are cultural constructions that are "malleable and negotiated," contrary to social ideals and common perceptions. Larsen points out that differences in gender and ethnicity in the spirit world are expressed largely in terms of aesthetics, attributes, and types of social relations rather than differences in essence; and that spirits transgress Zanzibar ideals of modesty and concealment by expressing emotions and transgressions of social ideals that are normally concealed. Thus spirits express the "contradictions, ambiguities, and paradoxes [of] life" (157). Although Larsen repeats many of these main theoretical points throughout the book, these repetitions make her points more memorable and understandable (especially for students not familiar with this type of interpretation) and also explore different aspects of her central themes.

One important asset of Larsen's study is that it presents the diversity of Zanzibari opinions about spirits and reactions to them, often through individual examples. She also makes a major contribution by exploring what various individuals experience during spirit possession and how they interpret and perceive it. Larsen also gives us a detailed exploration of Zanzibari norms of behavior, especially those connected with gender; gives us examples of how individuals deal with, manipulate, and transgress these norms in real life, and shows how spirit possession relates to these social processes. She focuses most on the *kibuki* (Malagasy spirits) because they relate the most to gender expressions, by being ritually focused with women and male homosexuals, coming in gendered pairs to the same person, exaggerating gender stereotypes, and openly expressing sexual emotions and behaviors that are normally concealed.

In conclusion, Larsen's description and analysis is complex and multilayered. Nonetheless, the book is very readable and suitable for undergraduates as well as specialists. It will appeal to those interested in spirit possession and Zanzibari and Swahili society as well as those more generally interested in gender, ritual, and performance studies, conceptions of the self and personhood, and the formation and expression of personal and social identity – the book in fact is part of a series on social identity in various cultures. Linda L. Giles

Lecomte-Tilouine, Marie: Hindu Kingship, Ethnic Revival, and Maoist Rebellion in Nepal. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009. 294 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-569792-6. Price: £ 24.99

Undoubtedly, anthropologists should incorporate more historical analysis into their fieldwork-based studies (and, perhaps, historians need more anthropological perspectives in their work), for this collection of essays by Marie Lecomte-Tilouine demonstrates how productive the results of such an inclusion can be. The main threads of this volume – tribal identity, Maoist rebellion, Hindu kingship, and caste organization – may initially seem a set of topics too diverse to fit together smoothly in a slim volume of essays, but by combining precise ethnographic observations and careful scrutiny of historical sources, the interconnections and evolution of these four topics are strikingly revealed.

Material incorporated into Lecomte-Tilouine's studies includes not just the long field conversations, oral traditions, and interviews that traditionally anchor all good anthropology, but also discursive sources ranging from a nineteenth-century novel through present-day Maoist poetry, plays, internet chat sites, polemical and academic publications, myths, military reports, royal chronicles, and on-going debates of Nepalese historiography. The results suggest that ethnographic researchers need to read equally widely in the diverse secondary literature, if they wish to achieve more subtle and complete ideas of what is going on at their field sites.

The volume consists of an introduction, eight chapters (all previously published separately between 1996 and 2006), and a short postscript. The introduction itself is a significant ethnological contribution, pleading persuasively for a more traditional, less reflexive engagement with any subject matter by the anthropological observer. More importantly, Lecomte-Tilouine argues that alterocentrism emerges as a corollary of the social complexity and holistic nature of caste society due to its internally structured alterity, while straightforward alterization emerges from dualist conceptions of society and political opposition, such as those advanced in Maoist social thought, an argument further sustained throughout the book.

Both the first and last chapters examine literary works. Chapter 1, "Spirits, Shamans, and Englishmen," analyzes a curious nineteenth-century novel, Girishavallabha Joshi's "Vīr Caritra," an adventure story that portrays the world of supernatural beings (a fictional device rare in Himalayan texts) while chapter 8, "Kill One, He Becomes a Hundred. Martyrdom as Generative Sacrifice in the Nepal People's War," is an examination of contemporary Maoist poetry. In each of these chapters, the texts are seen as metaphorical accounts of the world as Nepalese see it, with the themes of alterity and alterocentrism explored in these two distinct symbolic universes. Analyzing fictional encounters with otherness a century apart shows how alterocentrism in Nepal is evolving into alterization, a process nourished by tribal revivalism and the creation of group identities based on "indigenous" status, producing an increasingly negative evaluation of

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