

and can be read on its own without reference to the other chapters, there are some cross-referencing between them. The arguments in each chapter developed for the ritual it describes provides comparative insights for understanding the practice of Theravada Buddhist rituals and their relationship to society in the other countries. Unfortunately, there is no conclusion to the book in which comparisons between certain themes that appear in the chapters could have been made. For example, more detailed conclusive comparisons could have been drawn between the Lao and Sri Lanka processions and the *mandalas* they generate or about the manner in which the different governments try to monopolize the major rituals. Or again a comparative discussion about the influences of consumer practices and political events on the different rituals could have brought the present-day changes influencing the rituals into more comparative focus. Notwithstanding these and other certain limitations, the chapters provide interestingly informative reads that bring together some established writings on these rituals with the author's own personal observation and insights. They show us the present-day diversity of the major ritual practices performed by the lay followers of Theravada Buddhism in the respective nations. In this the book, which is also nicely illustrated, has accomplished its task.

Nathan Porath

**Hüsken, Ute, and Udo Simon** (eds.): *The Ambivalence of Denial. Danger and Appeal of Rituals*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2016. 315 pp. ISBN 978-3-447-10570-5. Price: € 38.00

"The Ambivalence of Denial. Danger and Appeal of Rituals" engages the subject of authorization and deauthorization in systems of belief and practice as they play out a number of locations, the majority of which are to be found in Asia. Twelve chapters including a thoughtful and informative introduction and a reflective afterward provide a detailed and lively discussion of how rites and ritual performance act as primary mechanisms and signifiers to speak the "truth", however and for whatever reason that truth is deployed.

Central to the organization of the edited text are the concepts of ritual denial and criticism, and how these concepts function to "exercise ... judgement that makes value-commitments and value-conflicts overt" (Grimes qtd. on page 7). According to the editors these concepts were examined in a preliminary fashion during an earlier conference, the proceedings of were published in 2013 in the *Journal of Ritual Studies* (7). The current text builds on this previous work but extends the understanding of the concepts of ritual denial and critique to include ambivalence allowing denial and critique to be more than a negative side of acceptance and compliment, even as they take rejection into their meaning frame. In ritual, as in life, nothing is clear-cut and the detailed case studies demonstrate this point nicely.

The first chapter by Ute Hüsken presents a comprehensive study of the rise of the Brahminic ritual efficacy of humans marked as female/feminine in the context

of Maharashtra. In this rise there was and is contestation from male/masculine ritual experts, but at the same time some of whom had trained women to perform "properly" the rites. Contradiction and paradox abound as the ritual systems of Brahmanism shift under multiple pressures not the least of which are feminisms in this context.

Continuing with Hindu traditions, Christof Zotter develops a case study that also takes up the subject of authenticity and the denial applied to those not belonging to one's group. Like the ritual experts of Maharashtra, the ritual experts of differing groups, "denominations of the Aghorī" (56) that engage the cremation ground and the transgressive power attributed to it. Seeking to establish authority over the other, each group challenges the rites of the other calling into question the authenticity of the rites and, therefore, their efficacy. The rites already inverted and, therefore, dangerous, should not be engaged by the foolish or the "false" (69) as each group might designate the other.

Udo Simon's contribution shifts to discuss contestation around the ritual observance of Muhammad's birthday. As a given in the previous chapters, ritual denial is not a stable concept and includes multiple meanings depending on how the denial is deployed. In this chapter Simon charts the play of denial of the festival of Muhammad's birthday from the Wahhabis through to modern critiques all of whom, in greater or lesser degrees, locate the festival as innovation and, therefore, un-Islamic and ritually inauthentic at best and a perversion of Islam. As with many dominant systems of belief and practice, adoption of practices, views, rites, representation, and narratives is systemically monitored and guarded against, to greater or lesser degrees depending on the context, but in the end life is messy and change is a normative aspect of ritual systems regardless how much change is denied (R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford 1977).

Denial of and innovation around rites linked to bloodletting is the subject of Ingvild Flaskerud's contribution to the volume. As with any blood sacrifice, contestation follows it as seen in Twelver Shiism wherein young men inflict on themselves bloodletting wounds overseen by older men to commemorate the death of Abū 'Abd Allāh Ḥusayn Ibn 'Alī, the third Imam (109). Denying, embracing, or ignoring the rite demonstrates, Flaskerud argues, a chain of denials wherein no fixed position or story's end is ever acquired. Rather rites shift, change, are renewed or denied all of which, she suggests, "releases creativity" (132). Non-human animal bloodletting is the subject of the case study written by Jürgen Schaffelchner when looking at the rite of *bali* (135). Denial of the blood sacrifice in the context of Hindu communities in Pakistan, in particular those connected to a female deity where ritual obligations include animal sacrifice, creates, argues the author, a situation of contestation, antagonism, and change, all of which mirrors the shifting social and political contexts that provide logic for the rite. A complex and interesting chapter, presenting the intersection of ritual and social identity that is played out every year at the shrine shared by both Hindus and Muslims alike.

Cezary Galewicz's contribution on the Vedic ritual

complex speaks of shifts and changes of the Vedic ritual complex that has proved instrumental in allowing the rites to reflect shifts and changes in the social body, rites such as non-human animal sacrifices. As Lokesh Ohri noted, following up on the rite of *bali* in the Western Himalayas practiced in relation to the worship of divine kings, changes in rites can and do happen particularly when said those rites come face-to-face with social censure. Hinduism and its connection with vegetarianism dovetails with animal rights activists in India, which have culminated in strong resistance to practices of animal sacrifice. In the face of such resistance, practitioners of blood rites have adapted their rites in the hopes they will be allowed to continue.

Speaking of different types of denial, Astrid Zotter's study looks at shifting social and political contexts in Nepal as rites of kingship give way to rites of democracy and the difficulties of performance in the face of denial of kingship, but adherence to some of the rites that are seen to secure the well-being of state or at least significant parts of it. Liang Chen's and Stuart Lachs's contributions ask how text and rite interplay in any given context and how denial of the other comes into play as a means to legitimate or delegitimize ritual practice and interpretation of text. Engaging the Confucian Classics and Zen written and spoken texts, the authors demonstrate how the practice of ritual is denied as a means to secure legitimacy and authority of Confucianism and Zen. The final contribution is an afterword written by Ian Reader whose piece provides some very nice concluding commentary on the concept of denial and the contributions to the text. Reader draws the reader's attention to the polysemic meaning of denial and how it functions positively, negatively, affirming or proclaiming or both (308) as ritual performers seek a multitude of ways by which to express and define their worlds.

In all, the text is a fine collection of narratives that provide amply detail and evidence for the arguments and views expressed. Each of the authors is well versed in the material they are engaging, while each has a strong grasp of ritual and its many peculiarities. They also situate the rites and ritual complexes in detailed contexts that allows the reader to follow the discussion. This is helpful as the contexts are derived from multiple sites throughout Asia. Equally, they engage a number of ritual complexes allowing for an interesting comparison of the denial of ritual. This is an impressive text, one that furthers our understanding of ritual to include change, adaptation, denial, anxiety, and antagonism as integral to the continuance of ritual. Performers of ritual may deny change and innovation, but without these aspects ritual would indeed be without meaning.

Darlene Juschka

**Iselin, Lilian:** Mobile Technologien und nomadischer Raum. Motorisierung, Mobiltelefonie und Urbanisierung in Süd- und Osttibet. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017. 310 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-050029-5. (Welten Süd- und Zentralasiens, 7). Preis: € 99,95

Ausgehend von den aktuellen, tiefgreifenden gesellschaftlichen und räumlichen Transformationen, die von

den politischen und städtischen Zentren der VR China aus auf die Regionen des tibetischen Hochlandes einwirken, geht der vorliegende Band der Frage nach, wie Technologie und Infrastruktur die Lebensweise tibetischer Nomaden beeinflussen. Im Mittelpunkt der Studie steht, wie diese mit Neuerungen interagieren, was sich wie in ihrem gelebten Alltag verändert und wie sich ihre Mobilitätspraktiken (neu) konstituieren. Untersuchungsgebiet ist der südlichste pastorale Raum der klassischen tibetischen Region Amdo. Dieses der heutigen chinesischen Provinz Sichuan zugehörige, sich auf 3 500–4 000 m Höhe erstreckende Nomadengebiet galt bis ins 20. Jh. als schwer zugänglich. Durch ihre eigenen, zwei Jahrzehnte zurückreichenden Erfahrungen dort konnte die Autorin den Wandel zu einer immer stärker in Chinas moderne Infrastruktur integrierten Region unmittelbar mitverfolgen.

Dreh- und Angelpunkt der untersuchten Neuerungen Motorrad, Auto und Mobiltelefon ist die Verflechtung von Infrastruktur und "mobilen Technologien" mit Alltagspraktiken. Dabei geht die Autorin davon aus, dass eine Technisierung von Mobilität durch Motorräder und Autos und der Kommunikation durch Mobiltelefone soziale und räumliche Transformationen verursachen und dabei Kontinuitäten und Brüche sichtbar werden, die sich in sozialen Beziehungen und deren Räumlichkeiten abzeichnen. Die Präsentation der diesbezüglichen empirischen Erfassung macht den lebendig wirkenden Kern des Buches aus, dessen Fokus auf der Analyse der mit der (Tele-) Kommunikation in Zusammenhang stehenden Praktiken im nomadischen Alltag liegt. Die Autorin will zeigen, wie nomadische Akteure die – durch die vom Staat geschaffene Infrastruktur dichotome – räumliche Einteilung in Peripherie und Zentrum durch die Nutzung mobiler Technologien und daraus resultierenden Praktiken modifizieren. Dabei interessiert insbesondere, wie sie mittels der Mobiltelefonie neuartige Verflechtungen von Orten und Personen und somit eine Form von Translokalisierung schaffen. Der Text wird mit 25 Abbildungen illustriert, die zusammen mit dem empirischen Material einen plastischen Eindruck vom Lebensraum und den beschriebenen Alltagspraktiken der Nomaden im südlichen Amdo vermitteln.

Die acht Kapitel des Buches sind drei Themenbereichen zugeordnet. Deren Benennung – Aneignung, Inkorporation, Konversion – bezieht die Autorin auf die Terminologie des Domestizierungsansatzes, der ihrer Studie als konzeptuelles Instrumentarium dient, um die Prozesse der Integration von mobilen Technologien in die Alltagswelt der Nomaden zu untersuchen. Da ihr Forschungsprojekt analoge Phasen durchlaufen habe, will sie das Prozesshafte darin durch eine entsprechende Unterteilung verdeutlichen: indem sie sich zunächst mit den Forschungsfragen und dem Material auseinandersetzt und sich dieses entsprechend *aneignet*, es in der Folge durch Ordnen in ihren Denkprozess *inkorporiert*, um es schließlich über die Analyse in die von der Arbeit angeleiteten Fragen und Thesen betreffende Resultate zu *konvertieren*.

Das 1. Kapitel führt in die Forschungsfragen ein und im Kontext von anschaulichen Versatzstücken aus dem empirischen Material an die methodischen und theoretischen Überlegungen heran, die die Forschung der Autorin