

proaches are conducted skilfully and the end result is not a set of discrete snapshots but an incitement to work with connections and contrasts. It is not that the two regions are identical or that a theory that has proved fruitful in one place must generate similar results elsewhere. Indeed, the chapters powerfully demonstrate diversity and diversification within both Amazonia and Siberia. Nonetheless, the varied ways of being in the world that might be called “animism” (or the plural “animisms”) generate topics that reward this kind of collaborative dialogue of experts.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, it is possible to see the book as debating the relative and shifting meanings and roles of categories like nature, culture, and the supernatural or spiritual. We meet animals (domesticated, hunted, consumed, predatory, and “spirit-charged”) and shamans (some of whom are animals, or vice versa) in every chapter. But the topics generated by these underlying themes engage with what it might mean to be a person – a self, an individual, a human, a “non-human” or “other-than-human”, a relation of plants and/or animals, a “spirit” or an “enemy”? – and what it might mean to own or be owned, consume or evade, to participate or differentiate, and otherwise relate to place and larger-than-human community. Widespread Amazonian and Siberian notions of transformability of persons (whatever that category means) might encourage a richer openness to a transformation of our ethnographic disciplines in the face of work by colleagues elsewhere. This, finally, is a significant part of this book’s interest, power, and promise.

Graham Harvey

Buckley, R. P.: *The Night Journey and Ascension in Islam. The Reception of Religious Narrative in Sunnī, Shī‘ī and Western Culture.* London: I. B. Tauris, 2013. 360 pp. ISBN 978-1-84885-986-9. Price: £ 59.50

Nach allgemein islamischer Überzeugung begab sich der Prophet Mohammed sowohl auf eine Nachtreise von Mekka nach Jerusalem (*Isrāʿ*), als auch auf eine Himmelfahrt (*Miʿrāj*). Die harmonisierende Deutung der sog. Orthodoxie, die bereits in der paradigmatischen Prophetenbiografie von Ibn Ishāq aus dem 8. Jh. vorgestellt wurde, verknüpft die Erzählung der nächtlichen Reise nach Jerusalem unmittelbar mit der Himmelfahrt. Weiterhin hat sich in den verschiedenen Ausprägungen des Islams eine Mehrheitsmeinung herausgebildet, die besagt, dass die wunderbaren Reisen von Mohammed körperlich und im wachen Zustand stattgefunden hätten. Jedoch waren schon zu Lebzeiten des Propheten sowohl die horizontale als die vertikale Reise umstritten und im Laufe der Zeit ist das Thema in allen möglichen Facetten von islamischen Gläubigen durchdekliniert worden. Die einschlägigen Koranstellen und Prophetenüberlieferungen sind nicht eindeutig und haben deshalb Anlass für vielfältige Diskussionen gegeben, die bis heute fort dauern. Dem Arabisten Ronald Buckley ist es gelungen, ein Standardwerk zu verfassen, das eine wertvolle Übersicht der unterschiedlichen Interpretationen bietet. Klar thematisch strukturiert, schöpft dieses Buch vor allem ausgiebig aus arabischen Quellen. Aber auch (englischsprachige) Web-

sites aus der ganzen Welt und englischsprachige Debatten aus dem indischen Subkontinent werden berücksichtigt. Die Studie widmet sich hauptsächlich dem sunnitischen Islam, während die beiden Schlusskapitel sich mit Sonderthemen befassen: Kapitel 6 setzt sich mit den Auffassungen zu *Isrāʿ* und *Miʿrāj* innerhalb der Strömung der Imamiten oder Zwölfer-Schiiten auseinander, während Kapitel 7 näher auf westliche Sichtweisen eingeht, wobei die Zeitspanne vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart behandelt wird. Buckley hat hier ein fast enzyklopädisches Werk geschaffen, das außerdem in einem sehr angenehmen, gut lesbaren Stil verfasst worden ist.

Edwin P. Wieringa

Couderc, Pascal, and Kenneth Sillander (eds.): *Ancestors in Borneo Societies. Death, Transformation, and Social Immortality.* Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2012; 390 pp. ISBN 978-87-7694-092-8. (NIAS Studies in Asian Topics, 50) Price: £ 19.99

This volume examines the various ways ancestors factor into social life in Borneo. Many studies have been done on mortuary rights, including the complex secondary mortuary rituals that involve exhuming the bones of the deceased and placing them in ossuaries. However, many of these studies ended there, without examining the role of ancestors in Borneo religions and societies. This volume seeks to situate Borneo ancestors within the literature on ancestorship and examine the types of ancestor spirits that play a role in Borneo societies.

To begin to position Borneo ancestors within the literature, Couderc and Sillander grapple with terminology in the introduction. Definitions of ancestorship that work well for unilineal societies fall flat in Borneo societies that reckon kinship bilaterally and collaterally. Additionally, ancestors integrate within the larger religious domain in Borneo, so we do not find the distinct ancestor cults one may find elsewhere. Becoming an ancestor requires more than simply dying; even complex mortuary rituals do not guarantee that one will become an ancestor. Conversely, while those who become influential in life may be more likely to receive complex mortuary treatment, failure to receive those rituals does not preclude one from becoming an ancestor. At the same time, ancestorship is not constrained by biological descent. In some cases, accomplished individuals may become important local ancestors despite not having left any descendants (see the chapters by Sillander, Couderc, and Oesterheld). Even death is not always necessary, as described in Couderc’s discussion of transformed ancestors among the Uut Danum and Béguet’s chapter on transformed ancestors among the Iban.

In addition to the issue of how one becomes an ancestor, there is a wide variety of types of ancestor spirits and of relationships with the living found in Borneo. Genealogical forebears may undergo mortuary rituals that separate them from the living, so that they become part of one collective unit that has little or no influence in the daily lives of the living. At the other end of the spectrum, some societies include distant mythological ancestors who actively aid the living within the list of influential ancestors.

Distant and not-so-distant ancestors play many roles between these two poles in Borneo societies, as described in this volume.

Given these considerations, Couderc and Sillander define ancestors as “people who live on in the memory of individuals, groups, or entire societies through what they have transmitted to them ... They must *live on through their influence*, either as contacted or otherwise influential spirits, or as remembered past characters taken into consideration” (12). Biocultural ancestors who no longer directly influence the living are simply dead elders, not ancestors within the context of this examination of ancestorship.

Starting out, Sillander describes the role of the ancestors among the Bentian of East Kalimantan. Ancestorship among the Bentian takes many forms, as the dead can transform into one of several types of spirit figures that have different roles and relationships with the living. Other analyses have critiqued the discussion of ancestors among Borneo societies because they are so often referred to as a collective unit. However, Sillander makes the important point that the social context affects the way people talk about ancestors: when seeking social cohesion, people tend to refer to an inclusive collectivity that defines “us,” but they tend to refer to individual ancestors to distinguish “us” from “them.” Individual ancestors may be invoked to substantiate one’s legitimacy as a leader, for example (89), in addition to being called upon in various ritual contexts.

Chapters two (Sather) and five (Béguet) address ancestorship among the Iban of western Borneo. Sather describes the funerary rites and various types of ancestors among the Iban. Similar to Sillander’s account, the Iban sometimes address the ancestors as individuals, and sometimes as a collective unit. Yet some ancestors continue to play a role in Iban religion and society. For example, dead shamans (*manang*) live on as spirit companions to *manang* in healing rituals (123) and other ancestors continue to influence the living as guardian spirits after the funerary rites have been completed. Béguet argues that Iban *petara*, which Sather glosses as “gods” (115), are in fact ancestors that have been transformed. Sather notes that the terms *antu* (spirits) and *petara* (gods) are used interchangeably in rituals seeking help from supernatural beings, and refers the reader to Béguet’s chapter to flesh out this relationship between ancestor spirits and *petara* (118). Béguet analyzes *petara* within the context of animism, with ancestors who transform into spiritually potent animals maintaining important relationships between the living human and the animal worlds.

Couderc examines the role of transformed ancestors among the Uut Danum of West Kalimantan. In his opening paragraph, he recounts an incident in which a man was said to be transforming into a watersnake, which would have transformed him into an ancestor without the man even experiencing death. While the man in this incident recovered and was alive and human years later, this ability to escape death through transformation creates an important category of ancestors. Ancestorship in this case is a contractual relationship based on an inherited alliance, with or without direct descent. In contrast, ordinary

dead receive funerary rites, have limited influence in the affairs of the living, but descent obligates them to do their part in the limited interactions they have with the living, predominantly within the mortuary rituals.

Ancestors played a prominent role in Dayak-Madurese conflict in Kalimantan. Local and mass media outlets sensationalized the violence, highlighting the exotic otherness of Dayak ritual claims and practices. Academics responded by pointing out the very real social and political history that contributed to the conflict, downplaying the ritualistic aspects. Oesterheld seeks to go beyond what has been written from either of these vantages to let the Dayaks involved speak for themselves, focusing on an outbreak of violence in 2001.

In their chapters, Appleton and Payne add to the argument for the importance of ancestors in Borneo societies. Appleton addresses the role of the ancestors among the Melanau of Sarawak, most of whom are now Muslims or Catholics, yet who continue to speak of supernatural influence from ancestor spirits. Payne explains various categories of spiritual possession found among the Benuaq of East Kalimantan, involving a range of characters, from distant mythological ancestor spirits to the spirits of the recently dead.

Helliwell wraps up the book with an account of a different variety of ancestorship found among the Gerai of West Kalimantan. Rather than tracing descent through human ancestors, the Gerai trace the ancestry of a set of ritual items grouped as a “ritual hearth.” In many ways, the relationships traced for the hearths fits the pattern of ancestorship found elsewhere in Borneo, except for the focus on ritual items to the exclusion of human ancestors.

Overall, this volume provides a wealth of ethnographic detail on the role of ancestors in Borneo societies. The evidence makes a strong case for the importance of ancestors, in various forms, in the ritual lives of several Borneo societies.

Angela Pashia

Dirlik, Arif, Guannan Li, and Hsiao-Pei Yen (eds.): *Sociology and Anthropology in Twentieth-Century China between Universalism and Indigenism.* Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2012. 371 pp. ISBN 978-962-996-475-7. Price: \$ 51.00

Another collection of essays, in the form of a book, on the history and present state of Chinese anthropology and sociology, includes 13 chapters but its “List of Contributors” has left one author unmentioned, Professor Sun Liping, a famous sociologist of China today. Perhaps it does not matter, because occasional omissions or slight incoherence should mean little for a reader if whose hope is to survey the general development of social sciences, for such a purpose the collection is assumed to serve, which came out as the result of “three annual workshops held in Canberra, Beijing and Hong Kong between 2007 and 2009 on the topic of ‘the Formation and Development of Academic Disciplines in Twentieth-Century China’” (vii). A number of famous scholars, in and outside mainland China, have appeared in the volume, whose names, such as Arif Dirlik, Wang Mingming, or Al-