

Wie in anderen kosmogonischen Mythen werden auch in der "Leyenda de los Soles" in Einschüben, sozusagen nebenbei, Dinge der Gegenwart erklärt. Z. B. wird das gescheckte Fell des Jaguars darauf zurückgeführt, dass er als Helfer beim Selbstopfer der Götter nicht in das Feuer, sondern nur darüber sprang. Dabei wurde sein Fell angesengt, was die dunklen Flecken verursachte (95). Die Parallelen zu allgemeinen Mythencharakteristika könnten jedoch beträchtlich ausgeweitet werden. Bei der Entstehung der Sonne durch das Selbstopfer des Gottes Nanahuatl ist kurz erwähnt, dass dieser eigentlich nicht ins Feuer springen will, da er doch verkrüppelt sei (74). Riese bezeichnet diese Äußerung als mögliche Ausrede. Verkrüppelung bzw. Unvollständigkeit, die durch das Selbstopfer aufgehoben wird (der verkrüppelte Nanahuatl wird zur makellosen Sonne), ist jedoch ein weitverbreitetes Mythenmotiv. Hier steht es zudem in Zusammenhang mit dem Schicksal des Mondes, der nach Nanahuatl als Zweiter ins Feuer springt. Er verliert durch das Selbstopfer seine Vollständigkeit und wird verkrüppelt (sein Gesicht wird mit einem Kaninchenkrug zerschmettert), was die heute noch sichtbaren Mondflecken erklärt (84).

Es zeigt sich eine Gliederung des Mythentextes in die Erschaffung der Welt in den ersten fünf Kapiteln (Die fünf Weltalter, Sintflut und Feuererzeugung, Erschaffung des Menschen, Auffindung des Mais, Geburt der Sonne). Dann setzt mit der Zeit der Wolkenschlangen ein ebenfalls in fünf Kapiteln geschildertes neuerliches Schöpfungsgeschehen ein, das mit dem Untergang der Tolteken endet (Die Wolkenschlangen, Xiuhnel und Mimich, Mixcohuatl, Eins Rohr, Untergang der Tolteken). Nun beginnt im 11. Kapitel die Wanderung der Azteken, die mit ihrer Ankunft in Tenochtitlán endet. Das 12. und letzte Kapitel schildert die Geschichte Tenochtitláns und die Eroberungen der aztekischen Herrscher. Es endet mit den Eroberungen des letzten Aztekenherrschers Moctezomatzin und der Ankunft von Hernán Cortés sowie Jahresvorträgen "für eine nicht ausgeführte annalistische Fortschreibung des Berichtes" (178, Fn 608).

Deutlich wird in der "Leyenda de los Soles" damit die oft besprochene und diskutierte Wechselwirkung zwischen Mythos und aztekischer Geschichte. Die Azteken fassten den Mythos offenbar nicht als abgeschlossenes Ereignis in der Vergangenheit auf, sondern verstanden ihn als ein Geschehen, das sich in abgewandelter Form wiederholte und das daher den Deutungsrahmen für ihre Gegenwart bildete.

Es ist der Arbeit von Berthold Riese und seinen Mitarbeitern zu verdanken, dass die in der "Leyenda de los Soles" überlieferte Mythologie nun vorbildlich aufbereitet vorliegt und darüber hinaus damit auch ein Einblick in Sprache, Weltbild und Geschichte der Azteken sowie deren Erforschung gegeben ist. Brigitte Wiesenbauer

**Rio, Knut Mikjel:** The Power of Perspective. Social Ontology and Agency on Ambrym Island, Vanuatu. New York: Berghahn Books, 2007. 270 pp. ISBN 978-1-84545-293-3. Price: \$ 80.00

This study of ceremonial exchange and its role in constituting society is based on 18 months of ethnographic research centered in the village of Ranon on Ambrym's west coast. Exchanges taking place at marriage, death, and male initiation are described in some detail, but this is a very theoretically oriented book as well. Ethnographic description and theoretical discussion are mutually illuminating. Demands are made on the reader, but the book is well worth the effort.

Ambrym Island, Vanuatu, has occupied a prominent place in kinship studies since the time of W. H. R. Rivers. Rivers interpreted the Omaha-type terminology he recorded there in terms of systematic intergenerational marriage. In the 1920s, Bernard Deacon viewed Ambrym kinship in terms of a six-section marriage system and was impressed by the ability of an informant to represent it as a simple line figure drawn in the sand. Later Harold Scheffler reinterpreted the system in terms of the generality of sister exchange and the structural equivalence (reflected in the terminology) of ego's agnatic kin of alternate generations (e.g., FF=B; F=S) and of uterine kin three generations removed from one another (MMM=Z).

Rio summarizes this history and offers his own interpretation of Ambrym kinship and marriage. The focal point in his analysis is the relationship between father and son and their mutual nurturance. A male ego marries a woman equivalent to his MBDD, a woman whom his father calls "mother" and whose son the father will call "brother." At his son's circumcision a man kills pigs and amasses garden produce and money to give to the boy's mother's agnates in payment for their gift of life (maternal blood and milk). In turn, at the death of his father, the son will contribute pigs for the final payment to his father's maternal kin.

The author's discussion of the place Ambrym occupies in the history of kinship studies becomes the starting point for a broader analysis of Ambrym sociality and the concept of society itself, both as understood in North Ambrym and as a theoretical construct in social science. This is an ambitious undertaking. In the course of developing his argument the author makes a number of related theoretical claims, each of which could stand alone as the basis for the comparative study of Melanesian societies. These begin with the claim that the key to understanding the Ambrym concept of society is the "role of the third." This role is played by specific relatives, spirits, or leaders who stand, as it were, outside of social interaction and view it from a larger, more inclusive perspective than any of the principals. For example, a bride's mother's brothers (who are also the groom's *tubung*, or MF) are the quintessential "thirds"; they sit to the side and play no direct role in the wedding but, rather, monitor the ceremony "in relation to a totality of past and present kinship" (70). As his mother's fathers a man's *tubung* stand in a joking relationship to him, but they will also chastise him publicly for any failures on his part in his role as husband to their sister's child.

Rio grounds his discussion of the importance of the third in social life in Melanesian ethnography more generally and in Jean-Paul Sartre's analysis of reciprocity,

which the latter saw as something involving not only the two who exchange but also the “absent presence” of the third.

Rio's discussion of the role of the third generates a corollary. He sees this ability to stand “above” social interaction and grasp it in its totality as central to leadership in Melanesia in general and Ambrym in particular. In Ambrym, in addition the *mana*-conferring achievements of the great man, it is this ability to turn perspective around, which is the true source of his power. For example, Ambrym myths are associated with sand drawings; as the myth is told, a single curving line is extended until, at the end of the telling, a single figure emerges that both visually suggests key elements of the story and totalizes it. The figure reflects two perspectives: that of the characters in the myth as the plot unfolds through their movements, and the perspective of the outsider, the “third” who encompasses all these perspectives. The ability to make all acts and events in the story, or in social life itself, into one comprehensible picture is one of the Ambrym “great man's” special abilities.

Some have seen society in Melanesia as emerging from the sum total of reciprocal exchanges between individuals. But, in agreement with Sartre, Rio sees reciprocity as dependent on “the third” because “only he ... can discover its binary composition by being outside of it, and by operating on the level of the group itself” (61). The leader who assembles resources for a major ceremonial exchange is an important figure precisely because he is capable of envisioning the totality and manifesting it materially in displays of wealth. Like the sand drawings associated with myths, the pigs and piles of garden produce on display become a visual image of totality, in this case of society itself, the encompassing one. The produce is provided by many donors and repeatedly sorted into piles, each destined for a particular recipient, until the contributions of any one individual are no longer recognizable. The abundance is material evidence that, once again something remarkable has occurred – from the interests and efforts of many “momentarily constituted One-ness” has emerged (213).

Typically gift-giving has been viewed as a form of reciprocity, and reciprocity itself has been viewed as *exchange*, i.e., the transfer of goods, hospitality, women, or services from one party to another. In the concluding chapter of the book Rio argues that the gift and reciprocity operate within two different ethics. The gift is that for which no return is expected or even possible, such as the giving of life in the form of maternal blood and milk and general nurturance. On the other hand, reciprocity is giving for which a return is expected.

There is a tension between these two types of giving as seen in the relations between wife-giving and wife-taking groups on Ambrym. In order to maintain their unencumbered self-sufficiency as a group, wife-takers seek to redefine the gift of life as a debt of reciprocity, giving their wife-givers pigs and other forms of wealth at various life-crisis events, such as male circumcision. There is an antagonism toward the gift and the claims it establishes, and the purpose behind much of the cere-

monial exchange on Ambrym is said to be denial of the perspective of the gift and redefinition of the relationship as one of exchange.

Coming as it does in the very last chapter of the book, this discussion of the gift is not so much a summary of the author's argument as it is the introduction of a new theoretical issue and a new way of looking at the ethnographic material presented in earlier chapters. While the discussion in the conclusion is anticipated earlier in, for example, comments on Sartre's views on reciprocity, the issue merits more extensive treatment than it can receive in the brief conclusion. Since the author discusses the differences between the gift and reciprocity in the context of affinal relations, a discussion of the Hindu notion of the “pure gift” (i.e., the gift for which there can be no return) might be useful.

In North India the gift of a daughter in marriage is the quintessential pure gift; not only are wife-givers prohibited from taking wives from groups to which they have given women, but the flow of gifts and hospitality must also remain unidirectional (i.e., from wife-givers to wife-takers). In Ambrym, on the other hand, it is not altogether true that the gift of life is one for which no return is possible. Not only is true sister exchange a possibility (in which a group becomes both giver and receiver of life in relation to the same people), but also a male Ego's son's daughter (whom he calls “sister”) will marry a man equivalent to Ego's wife's brother, so that sister exchange again becomes possible in the second descending generation.

Nonetheless, the tension that Rio sees between the logics of gift giving and reciprocity in the relations between affines on Ambrym rings true and would be useful in understanding the relations between wife-givers and takers elsewhere in Melanesia. This and a number of other theoretical issues that he raises in this slender book would be useful to anyone interested in comparative studies of the region. There are a couple of shortcomings in the production of the book, however. There are more than the usual number of typographical errors, and two of the four photographs are underexposed; none of the photos are effectively integrated into the text. The line drawings and diagrams, on the other hand, are simple and effective.

James W. Turner

**Rößler, Maren:** Zwischen Amazonas und East River. Indigene Bewegungen und ihre Repräsentation in Peru und bei der UNO. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2008. 383 pp. ISBN 978-3-89942-857-5. Preis: € 36,80

Die im transcript Verlag veröffentlichte Dissertation der Leipziger Ethnologin Maren Rößler ist nicht die erste Arbeit, die sich mit modernen Formen indigener Selbstorganisation befasst. Sowohl zu den Indianerorganisationen des peruanischen Amazonastieflands, die den ersten Fokus des knapp 400 Seiten starken Buches bilden, wie zur indigenen Repräsentation im Rahmen der Vereinten Nationen, die den zweiten Pol der Monographie darstellt, ist in den letzten Jahren eine nicht unbeträchtliche Zahl an Publikationen erschienen. Dass sich die Lektüre des