

pattern is an anthropomorphic form. However, as with so much in this book, there is not enough material: this central discussion is contained in some half a dozen pages and leaves the impression of a gesture towards Gell rather than an actual analysis. Moreover, the artifact Were analyses and which shows the anthropomorphic pattern he dwells on is admittedly unusual: recognizable figures are not a normal feature of *kapkap*. Puzzlingly, the anthropomorphic nature of the design then vanishes from the analysis, to be replaced by the vague assertion that social relations and designs are cognate or analogous forms.

This problem is compounded by a sloppy definition of what constitutes a pattern. In his introduction, Were suggests a number of examples of patterns, which focus on plastic and graphic arts and performance. Yet having invoked pattern as a logical meta-medium, these and the concrete examples in the remainder of the text seem needlessly prosaic. It is unclear (and unexplored) what separates a humanly created pattern showing a “trace of consciousness” from a naturally occurring one, such as a crystalline formation – or where this line might be blurred, as in the mathematical models that he also alludes to. Indeed, there is no mention of language, or of the pattern which necessarily forms a part of *all* intelligible acts, beyond a passing reference to Benedict.

Shying away from these issues, the text often abandons a deeper exploration of pattern to focus rather narrowly on objects which are rather unproblematically “patterned” in a limited sense – although it does reserve a stronger use of the term to incorporate ideas and arguments that would otherwise fall outside its schema in a weaker version. Hence, where his argument is strongest and most interesting, Were is concerned with the idea of pattern as a geometrical figure whose logic implicates it in other patterns, both extant and potential. However, at other points in the text, pattern appears simply as a decorative feature of objects.

Hence, chapter 6 is concerned with transformations of clothing across Melanesia and chapter 7 discusses innovations in Tongan textiles. In both these chapters, the fact that the objects in question are patterned appears to be rather incidental – certainly “pattern” does not operate at a conceptual level to integrate the argument. Indeed, while the objects in question do indeed mediate social relations in extremely interesting ways, there is no evidence that they are able to do this because of the patterns that they embody. Rather, pattern is subjected to a familiar cultural analysis of appropriation and resistance. Some conceptual role for pattern is hinted at in the concept of a “pattern system.” However, this term remains unexplained, is not listed in the index and must be understood as a placeholder for culture – unfortunate considering the notion of pattern was introduced as a means to displace heuristics of difference.

The result of all this conceptual confusion is that Were’s book suggests a powerful, indeed compelling conceptual framework which is unfortunately at odds with much of the material he wants to cover. A great deal of that material is extremely interesting and would merit further publications. It is therefore sincerely to be hoped that

this disappointing volume represents the beginning of a longer programme of research and publication to develop the obvious potential of its component parts.

Will Rollason

Wilkins, Katharina: *Holy Water and Evil Spirits. Religious Healing in East Africa.* Berlin: Lit, 2011. 289 pp. ISBN 978-3-643-11179-1. (Beiträge zur Afrikaforschung, 47) Price: € 29.90

In “Holy Water and Evil Spirit” Wilkins explores religious healing and ritual practices in the context of the “Marian Faith Healing Ministry” in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, which is based on the tenets of the Catholic faith and offers Catholic healing rituals under the patronage of the Virgin Mary. The Ministry is rejected by the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference due to the practice of performing healing prayers and formal exorcism. Despite this fact the “Marian Faith Healing Centre” of Dar es Salaam is growing as public awareness of it rises. At the Centre meetings are offered every day for communal prayers held in Swahili consisting of four parts: Eucharistic exposition, the rosary, the “water service” and Mass. The founding Father, Felicien Nkwera, began his healing ministry in 1969, the same year he was ordained and when receiving a message from the Virgin Mary through one of his very first patients. Nkwera was told to heal human suffering and fight all evil in this world including evil influences on people, society, and the political system. Wilkins’ book contains four parts and eleven chapters in all. Part 1 introduces the Ministry and its national background focusing its present location, medical and religious pluralism characterizing the region as well as the Ministry’s ritual practices. Part 2 provides a presentation and discussion of the teachings and writings of Nkwera up till 2006, emphasizing his views on affliction regarding human beings, society, and the larger political system. Part 3 introduces the members of the Ministry and the pluralism characterizing their views on medical and religious healing and their understandings of the message. While Nkwera remains connected to global discourses and a network of Marian Martyrs such as those surrounding Fatima and Medjugorje, the followers tend to base their identity on the idea that Virgin Mary is there to help Tanzanians with their specific problems. Moreover, the followers see healing within a framework of personal salvation incorporating understandings from various belief-systems. Wilkins approaches the heterogeneity by looking at the individuals and how they ascribe meaning to certain teachings and ritual experiences. Their views are diverse and often contrast with the orthodox teachings of Nkwera. Part 4 deals with conceptual and ritual aspects of religious healing and with tensions between norms and individuality and how the rejection of Nkwera, his Ministry, and his followers by the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference becomes a crucial identity marker holding the group together. Hence ritual efficacy is found in explanation of affliction as a test of faith from God, the possibility to turn illness into a positive experience as well as social mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion and group solidarity. The monograph ends

with a discussion on how the Marian Faith Healing Ministry relates to both local and global perspectives on religious healing and how the orthodoxy of religious healing more generally combines institutionalized theologies and traditional healing practices.

Already in the introduction, Wilkens discusses her use of the term traditional in relation to both socially and culturally complex belief-systems and societies. Although the term modern is not mentioned, the present reader cannot but associate a more classical distinction in the background, i.e., the one between traditional and modern or tradition and modernity. Wilkens avoids the issue by stating that tradition and traditional societies change and, at the same time, have awareness about change – although according to an understanding different from the modernist meaning of it. Following from this, it is later argued that while typical for many new religious movements are their antimodern and antipositivistic rhetoric, this particular Ministry encourages a process towards individualization and what is denoted as “cognitive individualization” or, perhaps, a modern mind-set if not linked to ideas of modernization. Wilkens interpretation is based on the Ministry’s focus on: 1. the act of confession, that is, reflection on inner thoughts and intentions and, 2. Nkwera’s theory of disease causation, that is, disease being caused by the fault of one of the persons involved or, rather, affected. Healing is thus connected with the necessity of repenting personal sins and to learn to have faith in God. Still, by combining text analysis with personal healing narratives of the members and participant observations at the Ministry’s headquarter, Wilkens is also investigating the scope for individual interpretations and practices at play. In her analysis of religious healing and how a concept of healing is integral to religious practice in general, the author combines perspectives from the study of religion and from that of medical anthropology, so as to explore more generally the concept of faith healing as well as this particular Ministry’s concept and practice of healing. The conventional distinctions within medical anthropology between illness, sickness and disease is not here applied, as the author rather follows Nkwera’s terminology, when using disease to designate physiological, social, and cultural problems, while on an analytical level applying the term affliction or misfortune. Thus discussing the meaning of healing and of efficacy, Wilkens concludes that healing in this context is as much about feeling healed as about being healed in a biomedical sense. What is considered an effect of the ritual and whether the effects are regarded as efficacious healing is thus dependent on the interpretations of the participants.

The study further contextualizes the Marian Faith Healing Ministry within an environment influenced by Muslim, Catholic, Pentecostal, and biomedical knowing from both local and global contexts. In the case of the Ministry, Wilkens argues how Nkwera negotiates between mission Catholicism, conservative Marianistic Catholicism, folk Catholicism, traditional and Islamic healing experiences, socialism, and biomedicine. As already mentioned, he also mediates between modern individualism and traditional family orientation. Following from

this, the Marian Faith Healing Ministry has been labelled a syncretistic group and the term inculturation is often applied because African beliefs concerning spirits and spirit illnesses are incorporated despite its claimed Catholicity. Syncretism should, however, as Wilkens argues, be understood as a dynamic development of the plausibility that certain religious structures, ideas, and practices have for the people of this particular time and place. Further advancements in this argument could nevertheless have been achieved if the author had broadened her approach and followed the members beyond the Centre, investigating more at depth their lifeworlds and their commonsensical concepts of well-being as practiced and experienced in their everyday-life surroundings. Focussing on religion and ritual practice at the Centre only, may suggest that the author locates religion as if outside the boundaries of culture or worldview, an understanding that, in the end, compels the author to enter into a debate distinguishing between faith and well-being in a wider sense of the term. One may, however, wonder why a so-called secular perspective on religion makes the author somehow miss the point despite her emphasis on the agency and reality of nonhuman properties as well as on the importance of exploring people’s own approach to their “being-in-the-world.” Yet the combination of religion and healing should not be that surprising, which means that if religion is studied as integral to culture and thus in terms of a shared cosmology or worldview, it is forming part of a common way of “being-in-the-world.” This being said, the publication is a valuable contribution to our understanding of contemporary religious orders dealing with healing and ritual practices in the present ideological, social, and cultural complexity which characterizes urban Eastern Africa. NB: The editor at LIT could have deleted the excessive use of *etc.’s* which are, in most cases, creating confusions rather than clarity and may have requested the author to bring in the particular information they allude to.

Kjersti Larsen

Wright, Terence: *Visual Impact. Culture and the Meaning of Images.* Oxford: Berg, 2008. 193 pp. ISBN 978-1-85973-473-5. Price: £ 19.99

The expectation prompted by the title of this book – “Visual Impact. Culture and the Meaning of Images” – is that the reader will be treated to a comprehensive general theory about the impact that images have on audiences, shaped (the subtitle implies) by cultural meanings. Not so.

Although the book’s examples are drawn from many sources, its narrative arc is shaped like a funnel. It begins with a narrow premise and broadens out or progresses, culminating in the climax, which was a project in interactive digital media the author participated in early in this century (I gather finished in 2003). The theoretical arguments and examples of popular culture media that compose most of the book have been marshaled to justify and explain (at least to the author) why an interactive digital media project exemplifies and fulfills a particular psychological theory that the author has adopted as his own and champions.