

Kotnik, Vlado: *Opera, Power, and Ideology. Anthropological Study of a National Art in Slovenia.* Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010. 210 pp. ISBN 978-3-631-59628-9. Price € 34.80

On one of the days that I wrote this review, there was a demonstration outside La Scala to protest against cuts in funding for the arts in Italy, while inside the theatre, before the performance of Wagner's "Die Walküre," Daniel Barenboim addressed the audience (who included the president of the republic) and read out an article of the Italian constitution, which pledges government support for the country's historical and cultural heritage. The audience broke into applause, including the president. Opera can give rise to passionate feelings of national and civic pride. Even the opera house itself can be the focus of equally strong feelings, whether it be the rebuilding of Venice's La Fenice or Barcelona's Liceu (both victims of fire), the controversial restoration of La Scala, the building of new houses in Valencia or Helsinki, or my own Cardiff's failure to build Hadid's winning opera-house design in its waterfront regeneration.

There are many reasons for anthropologists to take an interest in opera. Opera companies and opera houses have long been the focus for national and local pride. Opera-going is a highly distinctive form of conspicuous cultural consumption. The sacred monsters of the operatic stage and their popular representations also furnish the recurrent themes of opera traverse those of anthropology itself – the circulation of women, transformations, and confusions of identity, orientalisering exoticism among them. Opera has provided its own distinctive transforms of classic mythologies, constantly re-working narrative motifs from classical mythology and European folklore. Opera is, moreover, one of the major performing arts in which multiple semiotic codes and cultural techniques come together in the *Gesamtkunstwerk* – music, dramaturgy, and scenic design. Despite this, there have been rather few anthropological analyses of opera and its realisation. As Kotnik points out, anthropologists have certainly been alert to operatic inspirations. Claude Lévi-Strauss, for instance, drew quite explicit parallels between his own work on the great cycles of American myth and the structures of the Wagnerian cycle of European myth-making. But there has been little sustained anthropological interest in opera itself, notwithstanding its excessive and even transgressive nature. Ethnomusicology, of course, occupies the terrain (or at least one terrain) where anthropology and music meet. But, as Kotnik also observes, ethnomusicology has grounded in the assumption that its subject-matter is not Western art-music. Likewise, anthropologists and analysts from cognate disciplines have paid disproportionate attention to popular or vernacular forms of music and performing art. Consequently, art-music and its performance have received disproportionately little attention from anthropologists.

Consequently, Kotnik is one of the few anthropologists to have turned his ethnographic gaze towards the opera. In particular, his is an account of opera in Slovenia, which has a national opera tradition that has historically been positioned as a "regional" one, based on

two opera houses, one in Ljubljana, the other in Malibor. Kotnik examines the invented traditions of opera in Slovenia, reflecting as they do an equally invented national identity. Kotnik interrogates the cultural traditions of this national opera, as enshrined in the "official" discourse of musicologists. This narrative is, of course, intersected by the historical transformation of Slovenia in the postcommunist era. Opera is one of the most "high" and extravagant of the arts, and as such it clearly lends itself to the sort of analysis proposed by Pierre Bourdieu. Kotnik indeed develops the entire monograph on the basis of Bourdieu's inspiration, discussing as he does the *habitus* of opera in Slovenia. He examines the processes of production, reproduction, and representation through which opera is made into consecrated art of national significance. In doing so he demonstrates the multiple definitions and contestations that characterise the cultural field of opera. In a manner characteristic of Bourdieu himself, these are expressed in summary models and diagrams of extreme generality and abstraction. It is not easy for the reader to work back from them towards an intuition of the sort of empirical evidence from which they are derived.

Kotnik has spent a number of years compiling his ethnographic research on Slovenian opera. This particular book is a little disappointing in one respect. The ethnographic detail of everyday life in the opera companies is not visible. This is not an "art worlds" ethnography as found in the work of Howard Becker, nor yet an exploration of performances as advanced by Felicia Hughes-Freeland. Kotnik refers to the ethnography, and writes about it, but he does not introduce us directly to the mundane practicalities of running an opera house, or the everyday work of company managers dealing with national and regional government. Although he has things to say about the repertoire of the Slovenian companies, we do not read about the practical aesthetics and commercial interests that inform the decision-making of *Intendants* and their boards. We certainly learn too little about the singers, musicians, stage crew, and others who make any and every operatic performance a possibility. While anthropologists can and should interest themselves in the discursive work that frames artistic conventions and traditions, this seems but half the story when the grain of the voice remains inaudible, and the techniques of the body remain invisible.

Paul Atkinson

Kronenfeld, David B.: *Fanti Kinship and the Analysis of Kinship Terminologies.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009. 371 pp. ISBN 978-0-252-03370-4. Price: \$ 75.00

The author completed a PhD dissertation on Fanti (southern Ghana) kinship in 1970 and has published regularly on the analysis of kinship and kinship terminologies, including much about the situation amongst Fanti peoples since that time. His 2009 book, reviewed here, brings together the main threads of his many works, most chapters (1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13) being slightly revised articles from *American Anthropologist*, *American Ethnologist*, *Anthropological Theory*, *Anthropos*, *Current*

Anthropology, L'Homme, Language, Man, and his chapters in certain books on cognitive anthropology, semantics, and mathematics. The result brings 40 or 45 years of one of the world's leading kin term analyst's art to bear in exploring kinship terminologies and behaviour in a single society.

The book is presented in 14 chapters grouped into four parts. Part I (chap. 1, 2, 3, 4) grounds us in the Fanti situation: terminology, behaviour, formal analysis, particular and universalistic analyses of Fanti terminology. Part II (chap. 5, 6, 7, 8) begins with the theoretical context in the late 1970s (Schneider, Needham, Scheffler, and Keesing) and then moves on to chapters on Morgan vs. Dorsey, on Tax and on Kroeber vs. Radcliffe-Brown. Part III (chap. 9, 10, 11) considers formalization and formal analysis and Part IV examines the Fanti sibling typology (chap. 12), Fanti language, inheritance, and kin groups (chap. 13) and a chapter on skewed systems (chap. 14).

Here I focus on chapters 4, 5 and 8.

The book deals with a robust matrilineal system in Africa, contrasting with the aged and often moribund African matrilineal descent systems of Bantu-speaking peoples in the Congo Basin such as what Mary Douglas has described for the Lele of Kasai. The author applies evolved, forceful analytical methods to the Fanti and the book would seem set to become a standard text for anthropologists who seek a commanding introduction to what vigorous kinship analysis looks like at the beginning of the 21st century and a concise introduction as to how we find ourselves with the tools presently to hand.

Part I ends with the previously unpublished chapter 4, "What a Fanti Needs to Know to Treat a Kinsman Correctly," on kinship behaviour. Completed in about 1971, it "describes in detail the behavioral data and its analysis via a mixture of various scaling and regression techniques" (14). In Part I's introduction, the author finishes off by noting that "[u]nlike the case with terminologies, the intervening years have seen very little formally explicit work on the *patterning of behavior* among kin" (emphasis mine) (14) and chapter 4 sets the stage for doing so in chapter 5.

In Part II the initial chapter (chap. 5) on Schneider, Needham, Scheffler, and Keesing is also previously unpublished and contrasts the author's own methods with those of the other authors mentioned, characterizing this general period (the chapter was drafted "around 1978") as a time when "the focus of anthropological interest [had] moved elsewhere" and the issues of the day had been "left hanging" (107). Kronenfeld asserts that those issues were in many instances unresolved because "no one had managed to frame them in the kind of explicit manner that would have enabled any logical working out of their specific claims and implications" (107). In chapter 5 he, therefore, examines those "claims made by the indicated theoreticians and then discuss[es] how the Fanti study relates to those claim" (107).

It is the book's longest chapter and covers the named authors and their frameworks individually. The author credits Schneider with criticizing the American preoccupation of the time with kin *term* analysis rather than kin-

ship analysis but characterizes Schneider's method of the time as a "retreat into Parsonian levels and systems" rather than substantial remedies (119). The chapter 5 section on Needham credits him with "delineating the kind of standard that ... [terminological analysis] ... must meet if they are to win acceptance by the general anthropological community" but bemoans the "less than total agreement concerning which studies have produced" what Needham sought (129).

The section on Scheffler is presented due to his status as "the major current proponent of Lounsbury's work" and Scheffler's status "as a kind of spokesman for a kind of Lounsburian 'school'" (129). It concludes with the assertion that "Scheffler's typology would omit most of the interesting facts about the Fanti terminology, including the information that is needed to explain the logic of that terminology" (146).

The first paragraph of the section on Keesing quotes a passage from a 1972 work by Kronenfeld: "Keesing has suggested that 'by taking kinship as our dominant model of the tribal social order, we have become skilled decontextualizers and oversimplifiers'" (146). The author then considers a number of elements of Keesing's major theses and notes points of agreement and disagreement, concluding that "Keesing is right in doubting 'that the labeled lexical categories of a language reveal directly the cognitively salient pieces into which a people segment their experience' ... The major conclusion of the Fanti study is a similar one" (151).

Chapter 8 ("Kroeber vs. Radcliffe-Brown on Kinship Behavior. The Fanti Test Case", *Man* 1975) contains the heart of the book's general thesis, concluding that "The data considered have been almost totally negative regarding the traditional and the structuralist views discussed above; that is, the available evidence is that the categorization of relatives by kin terms is not the basis on which behavior is assigned to these relatives" (197). "[T]he effect they do have is an indirect one in the sense that membership in a category affects the evaluation of position of a dimension of relationship (e.g., generation, closeness), which dimensional position, in turn, affects behavior" (198). That effect plays out from several loci: "It has already been noted that the K-series of behavioral attributes each produces a largely unidimensional scale of kintypes. This fact alone argues strongly for the independence view that there is some underlying genealogical information that is important to the assignment of behavior. Inspection reveals that relative age and real generation are consistently important factors. Sex, putative (i.e., skewed) generation, and genealogical closeness also seem to play a role, as does relatedness itself in some cases. These appear to operate more or less in a dimensional (as opposed to taxonomic) manner" (198).

It is especially chapter 5 and chapter 8 up to page 198 which persuade that something is incomplete (chap. 5) and amiss (chap. 8) in American traditions of kinship analysis. From page 198, *The Relevant Categories of Behavior*, we are presented what Kronenfeld finds to be more promising, offering individual expositions on the categories mentioned in the last three sentences of the pre-

ceding paragraph, leading up to the observation that kinship terminological patterns and kinship behavior patterns are both extended but not isomorphically and thus the limits of much previous analysis and the need for “a detailed rather than vague general accounting of the relationship between linguistic categories and behavior” (200).

Jeff Marck

Kuba, Richard, and Musa Hambolu (eds.): *Nigeria 100 Years Ago. Through the Eyes of Leo Frobenius and His Expedition Team*. Frankfurt: Frobenius Institut, 2010. 81 pp. ISBN 978-3-9806506-4-9. Price: € 16.00.

This beautifully produced small book contains a set of 8 essays concerning the expedition of Leo Frobenius to Nigeria in the years 1910–1912. The authors – three Nigerians and five Germans – discuss Frobenius from a variety of perspectives.

The Institute’s director, Karl-Heinz Kohl, reflects on Frobenius’ “vision” and his legacy in Germany since his death in 1938, arguing that the current renaissance of interest in Frobenius represents “the rediscovery not of a scholar but of a poet and an artist congenial to the people he studied.” Olayemi Akinwumi reviews the history of German interest in what eventually became Nigeria during the second half of the nineteenth century, whilst Musa O. Hambolu looks at Nigeria in the years of Frobenius’ expedition (1910–1912), quoting his remarks on Mokwa, Bida, and Tivland. Hans-Peter Hahn argues against throwing out the baby with the diffusionist bathwater, urging anthropologists to overcome their reluctance to “compare craftsmanship and artwork from different continents,” as Frobenius once attempted to do. Richard Kuba examines Frobenius’ approach to travelling in a caravan, his “less than delicate” manner of dealing with Africans and the role of Bida, his main interpreter/negotiator/organiser. One cannot help pitying Frobenius, whose limited language skills made it necessary for a chain of translators to translate “for example, from Jukun to Hausa, then from Hausa into English and finally into German.” Fodayemi Famoroti assesses Frobenius’ contribution to the recognition of African art as constituting a special field of study, related to the study of emotion. Gabriele Weisser analyses the documentation of 170 Nigerian masks by Frobenius and his team. Finally, the late Editha Platte revisits the vexed question of what happened to the bronze head of the Yoruba water deity Olokun which Frobenius “found” in Ife. Having examined the contemporary records, including those of Frobenius’ trial on charges of stealing ethnographic objects, she concludes that he was probably truthful in claiming that he was obliged to leave the head in Ife but that “the whereabouts of the original remain in the dark.”

The main attraction of the book is the large number of wonderful illustrations, at least half of them in colour, drawn from the 80,000 images in the Frobenius Institute’s online databank – photographs, paintings, maps, sketches – as well as from book covers and a few modern photographs of the Olokun head serving as a modern icon. Many of the watercolours and sketches made by the art-

ist Carl Arriens in Mokwa, Bukari, and Ife are fine examples of early “colonial art,” and even the pencil-and-ink sketches attributed to Frobenius himself have aesthetic as well as documentary value. These are complemented by photographs documenting the members of the expedition, Frobenius’ life and that of his successors Adolf Jensen and Eike Haberland. The book was produced to accompany an exhibition shown in various cities in Nigeria, and other pictures shown there can be seen on the Institute’s website.

Thus on a modest scale (and at a moderate price) we are offered what might seem to be a coffee-table book, yet unlike many coffee-table books is informative, critical, and difficult to criticise.

Adam Jones

Lemaire, Marianne: *Les sillons de la souffrance. Représentations du travail en pays sénoufo (Côte d’Ivoire)*. Paris : CNRS Éditions, 2009. 254 pp. ISBN 978-2-7351-1220-3. Prix : € 25.00

Dans l’anthropologie africaniste, les Sénoufo occupent une place remarquable du fait de la richesse de leur art sacré et figuratif. Les Sénoufo sont aussi un exemple de diversité ethnographique. Installés sur une aire de peuplement comprenant le sud-ouest du Mali, le sud du Burkina Faso et le nord de la Côte d’Ivoire, ils sont répartis en plusieurs groupes dialectaux et sociaux. Mais tous font de la valorisation du travail agricole le point central de l’identité sociale. Avec ce livre, Marianne Lemaire comble une lacune de nos connaissances sur les conceptions religieuses et rituelles du travail des Sénoufo Tyebara de la région de Korhogo.

L’histoire des Sénoufo de Côte d’Ivoire est inséparable de celle des Dioula et des Malinké. “Sénoufo” lui-même est un terme dioula servant à désigner les locuteurs de langue siena ou sena, repris par l’administration coloniale française.

Dans le chapitre introductif, Lemaire donne un bref aperçu du thème du travail dans l’œuvre des premiers anthropologues, souligne son importance, puis explore le champ sémantique et lexical de la notion sénoufo de travail. Les familles étendues, les lignages ou les associations d’âge constituent ici les unités de production qui coopèrent habituellement dans les domaines agricole et rituel. Toute la vie du paysan tyebara est centrée sur l’activité agricole qui valorise à la fois la souffrance physique et la souffrance morale, celle-ci permettant de soulager celle-là. Les deux dimensions se complètent toujours. Cette éthique du travail ne dérive pas des conditions de production économique ; ses conceptions sont formulées par le système culturel sénoufo qui fait de la souffrance la source de toute excellence. Et il n’y a pas de souffrance sans les forces de la surmonter. Le travail agricole entièrement dominé par la thématique de l’endurance a aussi ceci de particulier qu’il n’est pas comparable aux autres formes d’occupation comme garder du bétail ou faire du commerce, deux activités auxquelles les Sénoufo se réfèrent souvent, qui ne sont pas à rigoureusement parler du travail mais simplement des formes d’occupation. On comprend donc que les Sénoufo Tyebara aient plusieurs