

tora se concentra en lo que llama sus “historias”, a las que acusa de estar siempre a punto de ser demasiado grandes (*Too Big*) (50). Sin embargo, más que proponer un nuevo concepto (como estaría implícito, aparentemente, en el más o menos inexplicable término de “Chthuluceno”), Haraway parece más interesada en la búsqueda de lemas (117) e íconos, como, por ejemplo, el de un hombre ardiendo (*burning man*) (46).

En cuanto a la suerte de desesperación que cunde en ciertos círculos, “*Staying with the Trouble*” rechaza la necesidad de quienes toman por imposibilidad de conocer (*unknowability*) aquello que no es más que falta de predictibilidad de los desastres, extinciones y emergencias que nos afectan cada vez más (35). Por su tono, este libro podría, de hecho, considerarse como el manifiesto de una profeta optimista: “*recuperation is still possible*” (117). Haraway reconoce, sin embargo, que la esperanza por la que advoca puede ser presa fácil del futurismo que otros autores ya han denunciado: “*There is a fine line between acknowledging the extent and seriousness of the troubles and succumbing to abstract futurism and its affects of sublimed despair and its politics of sublime indifference*” (4).

Este es, en efecto, el inconveniente (*trouble*) al que la autora se refiere todo el tiempo en su libro. El de tener que vivir y morir en un planeta dañado, en un hogar colectivo – que a veces llama “*terra*” (29) – convertido ya en una suerte de ruina (37), en un mundo de escombros post-fin-del-mundo (86). ¿Cuál es la receta que Haraway propone para no sucumbir en este aprieto? Nos da una respuesta doble, cuya generalidad no deja de ser flagrante. Por un lado, ser responsables y mantener cierta capacidad de reacción (*response-ability*) (2). Por el otro, se trata de aprender a ser menos mortíferos (98), a estar “verdaderamente presentes” en los “embrollos” contemporáneos: “*staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present ... as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings*” (1).

¿Pero dónde y cómo considerar, en la práctica, estos embrollos? Los casos descritos a lo largo de este libro hacen pensar, por ejemplo, en la ganadería: “*people and animals tangle together in innovative ways that might ... render each other capable of a finite flourishing*” (16). El método sugerido por Haraway para describir estos entrelazamientos, que llama “*Sympoiesis-making-with*” (5), se asemeja a una variante de la “ontografía” de Martin Holbraad, al menos en la medida en que propone reformular nuestros propios conceptos (aunque sin énfasis en la experiencia etnográfica): “*thinking beyond inherited categories and capacities*” (7). Siguiendo con su inclinación por los lemas, Haraway retoma la máxima de Marilyn Strathern: “*incumbe con qué ideas pensamos otras ideas*” (34).

En suma, “*Staying with the Trouble*” no parece estar dispuesto a ofrecer mucha precisión. Haraway se detiene en metáforas inspiradoras e imprecisas como, por ejemplo, aquellas de “cortes” y “nudos”: “*What must be cut and what must be tied if multispecies flourishing on earth, including human and other-than-human beings in kinship, are to have a chance?*” (2). ¿Dónde, cómo y sobre todo qué, pues, cortar y anudar? Otro término, tan usado hoy como el de Antropoceno, suele entrar en escena en estos

momentos del libro: *cosmopolitics*. Haraway se vale de él, sin embargo, de una manera más bien breve; por ejemplo, cuando se trata de legitimar ciertas acciones: “*decisions must take place somehow in the presence of those who will bear their consequences. That is what she [Isabelle Stengers] means by cosmopolitics*” (12). Cercenar y ligar son, pues, parte de la idea de reaprender a conjugar mundos con conexiones parciales (13), mundos donde el excepcionalismo humano y el individualismo restringido (*bounded individualism*) se han vuelto simplemente impensables. Esto es, ambos se han tornado en conceptos con los cuales ya no es posible, para Haraway, pensar (30 y 57): “*Neither One nor Other, that is who we all are and always have been*” (98).

En general, los capítulos de “*Staying with the Trouble*” apelan menos a experiencias etnográficas que a las lecturas recientes de Donna Haraway. Podría decirse incluso que el libro es, en buena medida, una suerte de diario centrado en abordar las ideas que están hoy sobre el tapete. Y aquellas seleccionadas son bastante dispares: desde las palomas que merodean en las grandes ciudades hasta los juegos de vídeo alternativos, pasando por Adolf Eichmann y ciertas películas animadas de ciencia ficción. Aunque las sucesivas especulaciones que encontramos no estén exentas de interés, incluyen, por momentos, divagaciones no del todo comprensibles: ¿Qué es una “ecuación integral múltiple fabulada para Terrapolis” (10)? ¿Qué puede significar una afirmación como la siguiente: “*out-of-place urine from particular female bodies is the salty ocean needed for my tale*” (105)?

Algún lector interesado en la antropología podría recordar, por ejemplo, la propuesta de Michael Taussig, de alejarse de la prosa convencional del “*business-as-usual*” (50). Quizá podría así, en efecto, entenderse lo que Haraway llama “una figura ubicua en este libro” (2): “mi juego SF” (16). Esto es, unas siglas, en inglés, que nombrarían desde ciencia ficción (*science fiction*) hasta feminismo especulativo (*speculative feminism*). Lo mismo podría pensarse de las ficciones sobre el linaje de mujeres llamadas Camila, incluidas hacia el final del libro. En otros momentos, el lector podría preguntarse sobre la necesidad de caer en la provocación (49), como cuando la autora se refiere a su mascota como a su “compañero e investigador asociado” (7).

En suma, glosa, especulación y extravagancia encuentran un espacio en común en esta obra cuyas notas al final de página ocupan casi la tercera parte de la misma. Haraway es persistente a lo largo de este libro: se repite incesantemente, rumia sus autodefiniciones como si de una plegaria se tratase, como una jaculatoria frente a las grietas que debates como el del Antropoceno nos dejan entrever.

Juan Javier Rivera Andía

**Hays, Jennifer:** *Owners of Learning. The Nyae Nyae Village Schools over Twenty-Five Years*. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2016. 262 pp. ISBN 978-3-905758-60-3. (Basel Namibia Studies Series, 16). Price: CHF 32.00

The American social anthropologist Jennifer Hays

has written a fascinating book on the Nyae Nyae Village Schools in Namibia. The Village Schools are an innovative and unique mother tongue education initiative set in the Nyae Nyae Conservancy of northeastern Namibia. Conceived in the early 1990s and inspired by the optimism of a newly independent Namibia, the project was designed in close consultation by a hunter-gatherer community, the Jul'hoansi, and drew upon their traditional knowledge submission strategies. Significant parts of the book, which appeared in the series of Basler Afrika Bibliographien in 2016, are adapted from a PhD dissertation submitted by Hays to the State University of New York at Albany in 2007. Hays has also, after her PhD been involved in consultancies and fieldwork around the Nyae Nyae Village Schools. These studies have made the book up-to-date and allowed the author to describe the latest development and discuss what may happen to the project when a major donor, like NAMAS (the Namibia Association of Norway) seems to be forced to pull out. This reviewer has conducted several consultancies for NAMAS, also of the Nyae Nyae Village Schools – described in my book: “Whose Education for All? The Recolonization of the African Mind” (New York 2000, reprinted in Korea in 2006) and several articles. When parents in that area go hunting, the children have to go with them. The philosophy of the Village School Program is that the teachers should also go with the hunters. The school should not divide children from parents. The older people are integrated in these Village Schools, too.

The book by Hays is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the education situation. It contextualizes both the Nyae Nyae community and the research path Hays took within the educational context of southern Africa. Chapter 2 provides some background about the Nyae Nyae community, noting in particular their relationship and right to land. Chapter 3 discusses related literature in the field of indigenous education, examining the role of culture in educational processes. Chapter 4 reviews parts of the large body of literature about the Jul'hoansi with a focus on cultural patterns as they relate to child-rearing and educational practices. Chapter 5 provides a chronological overview of the development of the Village Schools and the various role players and transitions over the years. Rather than telling the story of the Village Schools in a strict chronological order Hays has chosen to organize the second half of the book topically, to best explore the various interwoven issues. This approach allows us to see how challenges have evolved – and how they have remained the same – over time.

When reading “Owners of Learning” – a direct English translation of the Jul'hoansi term for teacher – one is struck by the difference in culture between the egalitarian Jul'hoansi society and the nearby Namibian environment which has taken over European norms of obedience and hierarchy. The Village Schools provide an environment for the children geared to their cultural norms. The instruction is provided in the Jul'hoansi language, the language children normally speak and by teachers who speak this language. Children thrive and do well in these small schools. The problems come when the Jul'hoansi chil-

dren after the first three years in the Village Schools are supposed to transfer to the regular primary school in the nearby town Tsumkwe, where the language of instruction is English from grade 1. Not only is the language of instruction unknown to the Jul'hoansi children, but the culture is different in many ways.

One of the ways in which Jul'hoansi culture differs from Bantu and European traditions is in the use of corporal punishment. Though the use of physical punishment in schools has been illegal in Namibia since Independence it is still widely practiced both by teachers and principals in the normal primary and secondary schools in Namibia. Jul'hoansi and other San communities – indeed most parents come from hunting and gathering communities – generally do not hit children. For many San this is a new experience, when they begin attending government schools. Not surprisingly, one of the most consistent reasons that Jul'hoansi children have given over the years for dropping out of Tsumkwe schools is “beating by the teachers.” In the Village School Programme such punishment has never been practiced. When I visited the programme in 1995, the leaders of the programme told me that when the learners get fidgety or bored, the lessons are simply stopped. They then do something else or stop completely for the day.

One of the things that makes the book by Hays both interesting and reader-friendly is the fact that she frequently cites from her field-notes and gives voice to the participants of her study. To explain the difference between cultures who demand obedience from children and San culture, where children will do what they themselves are motivated to do, Hays cites a Jul'hoansi father and Village Schools Committee member speaking at a meeting in March 2002. He says: “We want them to go to school, but the kids themselves don't want to. We try to get them to go, but it is the kids' decision.” She also quotes from a conversation between Tsumkwe school officials and a Jul'hoansi mother where the mother tries to get the officials to understand that the school has to do something about the fact that it frequently provides lousy food or not any food at all. The officials do not listen to her complaint but inform her that it is the duty of parents, any parents, to see that their children go to school.

There are other problems for the Jul'hoansi with or without formal schooling. They have great trouble finding paid work. A Jul'hoansi man (April 2002) complains: “Before Independence the problem was that people didn't want us to attend school, only to work. Now we are supposed to attend school, and there is no work. But there are also many problems with the school, and our children keep dropping out.”

The book is well written and highly recommended as a text book in social anthropology, development studies, and education and development.

There are few obvious mistakes to point at but I was surprised that she referred to the late wonderful researcher Roger Avenstrup as Danish (100). Roger was Norwegian-Welsh with a Norwegian mother and Welsh father. He was a perfect speaker of Norwegian, not Danish, though he had a Danish wife. He had just accepted a position at the University of Oslo at the time of his untimely death.

Also, when she refers to “personal communication” it is a convention within academia that the date when such communication took place should be mentioned.

Birgit Brock-Utne

**Holt, John Clifford:** *Theravada Traditions. Buddhist Ritual Cultures in Contemporary Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017. 391 pp. ISBN 978-0-8248-6780-5. Price: \$ 68.00

Trying to provide an account of a major religious tradition that spans over time and geographical space is a difficult task. This is what “Theravada Traditions” tries to do. As the author tells us in the preface, it attempts to understand the way Buddhism is practiced within the context of indigenous Asian cultures rather than as an abstract system of religious ideas. Each of the five lengthy chapters of the book focuses on different Buddhist rituals, which are practiced annually, in five countries, Lao, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, and Cambodia.

In the short introduction Holt makes certain points about ritual in order to anchor the later chapters. His view of ritual is that they articulate a certain order as well as preserve collective identities (social political, national, or ethnic and familial) through the performance of a dramatized narrative. The narrative generates power that helps sustain the social order and engenders ethical awareness. Holt also stresses that rituals are not fossils from the past, but that they change and mirror the new social and political and economic circumstances surrounding their enactment. Each chapter in “Theravada Traditions” clearly shows how the rituals described have been changed by particular social circumstances.

In the first chapter on Phra Bang, Holt focuses on the role of power and image. Holt provides a brief history of the Phra Bang image bringing the descriptions up to the present in which it is used in the New Year festivals. He points out that in Lao (as well as in Thailand) Buddha images are associated with power, which invites popular petitions to the Buddha. He explores the relationship between power, spirit-cults, and Buddhism and develops an argument about traditional Southeast Asian states and *mandala/muang* (town-complex) systems in Tai-speaking regions. Further, in the pre-Buddhist spirit-cult complex there was an interrelationship between the “spirit of place,” the “headman,” and the people. Buddhism was grafted onto this system and brought in an ethical dimension to this power-complex. The Phra Bang image came to be invested with the “spiritual power of place.” Today, the Buddha image is the most symbolically potent vestige of Lao religious culture, which the state has been trying to monopolize in recent years. Further, there are similarities in the way the New Year procession of the Phra Bang image is carried out today with the manner it was carried out in the pre-modern past. What was important in the past was that the procession drew in everybody living within the *mandala* of the state and this is duplicated in present-day New Year festivals. Holt also suggests that the role of the Beauty Queen in the ritual represents the revival of the ancestral pre-Buddhist female spirit-force.

The next chapter focuses on another annual procession, that of the *asala perahara* and the veneration of the “Buddha Tooth Relic” in Sri Lanka. This procession entails a march with military symbolism around the town of Kandy during which time the exemplary centre defining the power of the state in relation to the rest of the kingdom is enacted. The chapter details earlier accounts of the ritual procession and brings the historical narrative of the ritual up to the late 20th century, when Sri Lanka was experiencing ethnic violence. If in the Lao case the present-day rituals draw the “world” into its orbit, Holt argues that the Sri Lanka ceremony is not designed to exclude the Tamils, but to incorporate them as ethnic inferiors within the Buddhist hierarchy. Holt’s argument is not novel and was already put forward by earlier authors working on the ethno-religious problems in Sri Lanka. He ends questioning whether the ritual can transcend its ethno-religious hierarchical representation to one representing an egalitarian multiculturalism.

The chapter on Thailand focuses on *upasampada* and *pabbajja* rituals of ordination. Although these ordination rituals exist in the other countries, they vary in their practice. Holt stresses that they even vary within Thailand between those practiced in villages and those practiced in larger cities, and he explores some of these differences. One main point he makes is that in Thailand there has been a shift in merit-making focusing on the transfer of merit from the individual who is ordained to his mother. Holt also takes the Dhammakaya movement’s ordination ceremony as one main example for his discussion. He concludes the chapter with discussions drawn from established publications on Thai Buddhist studies about the changing role of women in Thailand, which has opened up the question of women ordination, and he also discusses the ordination of trees as a practice influenced by the environmental movement.

The *kathina* (the formal act of giving robes at the end of the rainy season) and merit-making is the central ritual theme of the chapter focusing on Myanmar. The aim of gift-giving is to generate merit in order to overcome *dukkha* (suffering). For the present day, Holt tells us that the Burmese government has tried to monopolize gift-giving to obtain religious legitimacy in the manner that earlier kings have done. The most powerful tool that the *sangha* has against the monopolizing state is for the monks to turn their bowls upside down, a symbolic act suggesting that the *sangha* rejects its patronage. And this act the *sangha* has carried out on a number of occasions reflecting the tensions between the two parties. Finally the last chapter discusses the *pchum ben* in Cambodia during which time worshippers ritually care for the dead. A part of the interesting discussion of this chapter focuses on the period when the Khmer Rouge was in power and the chapter links the memorializing of the dead in present-day Cambodia to the tragedy of loss of human life during this period. The role of merit-making and transfer in these rituals is discussed. Holt also explores the possibility that the origin of *pchum ben* may have been influenced by the Chinese ghost festivals.

Although each chapter of the book is self-contained