

logical realm of language overlooks their nonlinguistic action-constitutive meaning, which can instead be successfully described by dint of pragmatism. To this end perhaps, Barnard later touches upon Peircian semiotics, by acknowledging the indexical relation upon which the meaning of early ornamental shell beads must have been grounded (78). However, while such meaning is recognized as not purely arbitrary in nature, it is nevertheless treated as symbolic in the anthropological sense provided above (i.e., holding a deeper cultural meaning). Yet, from a Peircian point of view, a symbol is by definition purely arbitrary (Göran Sonesson, *The Meaning of Meaning in Biology and Cognitive Science. A Semiotic Reconstruction*. *Sign System Studies* 2006.34: 172). In this light, the indexicality of the shell beads should deprive them of any sort of symbolic connotations. Hence, since the various approaches to symbolism are incompatible and abstruse, a narrower and clearer conceptualization would have been a fitting cornerstone for such an endeavor.

Yet this should not be taken to detract from this volume's broader picture. As Alan Barnard deftly demonstrates throughout his laudable discourse, ethnography has certainly a lot to teach us, both within and beyond the academic sphere, regarding the entwining of subsistence mode and worldview. For by indicating the fundamental differences in the way of living – or rather more appropriately, thinking – between the earlier hunter-gatherers and the Neolithic agro-pastoralists, he resonates on some contemporary ideological issues. Nowadays, we do not engage in mythological narration, nor do we get to know our fellow humans literally as kin; we do not acquire deep knowledge of the environments we live in, nor do we know how to use the little, if any, spare time we have left (124). Upon such realizations, Barnard reasonably suggests we understand and celebrate the hunter-gatherer lifestyle, as “[t]hat lifestyle is what made us human in the first place” (148). Informed by archaeological findings, anthropologists are thus urged to trace the beginnings of this way of life, for – put in literary locution – “that is what is in our ‘blood’” (147). As Pistorius informs the young narrator Emil Sinclair on the human condition, in Hermann Hesse's “*Demian*” (London 2006: 117): “just as our body bears in it the various stages of our evolution back to the fish and further back still, we have in our soul everything that has ever existed in the human mind.” Granted, however, we have ostracized much ancestral ideology from daily practice, hunter-gatherer ethnography proves indeed imperative in understanding the minds of our sapient ancestors, as well as our own.

Antonis Iliopoulos

**Beidelman, T. O.:** *The Culture of Colonialism. The Cultural Subjection of Ukaguru*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012. 385 pp. ISBN 978-0-253-00208-2. Price: \$ 30.00

This book can be described, charitably, as versatile and rich, or less charitably, as uneven. This reviewer found parts of it very insightful and enjoyable, and others somewhat frustrating.

It is Beidelman's fourth and, as he professes, last book on “the Kaguru,” a smallish ethnic group in eastern Tanzania. He bows out from his long research career in and on this area with a book that is part a researcher's memoir of his working life, part fairly conventional ethnohistory, and part a fine-grained account of the working of “Indirect Rule” in his research area during the late colonial period. Beidelman is in the privileged position of having encountered indirect rule, even if a late incarnation, still in working order during his earliest fieldwork stays, and the book certainly makes the case that detailed recollections of this period continue to reward study.

Beidelman first discusses anthropologists' views on colonialism in general and indirect rule in particular, and then gives an overview of Kaguru history from the late 19th to the mid-20th century. The meat of his story, though, is in the five chapters arranged under the heading “Colonial Life.” They examine his research context in 1957–58, the set-up of Kaguru “Native Authorities,” the functioning of chiefs' courts, late-colonial conflicts with the authorities, and the area's relations with the wider Tanzanian polity and society. A discussion of post-colonial change and continuity, with emphasis on the latter, rounds the book off.

There is historical information here on many things worth knowing about, including the Kaguru's interaction with the ill-fated “Groundnut Scheme” at its Kongwa site, and the form one rural region's economic and political marginalisation took on at the end of colonialism. Much of the book, though, is a close-up accounts of “indirect rule in practice.” Such an account is not novel, but the genre does not, to this reader, grow old; certainly not if it contains as much telling detail as is the case here. As an American outsider, Beidelman observed British officials with a detached eye, and recollects striking expressions of everyday racial hierarchies, such as the insistence that servants go barefoot and avoid their employers' gaze. He also gained much familiarity with the African personnel of indirect rule, and shows how personal animosities and alliances, African intermediaries' self-interest, and their deference to the British presence, shaped administrative practice.

The result was far removed both from prefabricated British accounts of “traditional” chiefly authority, with their emphasis on collectivism and consensus, and from the modernising or civilising principles that British officials cited to justify interference with “tradition.” Beidelman here is reminiscent of Martin Chanock's “Law, Custom, and Social Order”: like him, he makes very clear that the power of appointed chiefs did not have “traditional” legitimacy, but rather derived from backing by the colonial authorities. It was seen as arbitrary, partisan, and often exploitative. Nevertheless, talk of “tradition” provided a powerful idiom in which to debate power. This was so even if the debate did not reach the ears of the British officials who ultimately underwrote chiefly authority.

Implicitly, Beidelman thereby makes a strong case against seeing the late colonial period as too far removed from the interwar one. It is striking how much the British officials and African intermediaries he encountered in the

late 1950s resemble figures from, for instance, Margery Perham's interwar account "East African Journey." The colonial regime's limited capacity for reform, the way the colonial order remained to the last glued to fictions of racial superiority and monolithic tradition, becomes very evident. Concomitantly, the ambivalent role of the postwar language of improvement and modernisation becomes very palpable: on one hand, the assumption of the superiority of British civilisation, and of a "civilising mission," is clearly central to officials' understanding of what colonial rule was about. But the insistent optimism about the speed and extent of change both possible and desirable that characterised the postwar period remains awkwardly superimposed on the intrinsic traditionalism, the pessimism about change, of the indirect rule regime.

Particularly in his detailed accounts of the working of local courts, but also in the broader discussion of the "Native Authorities," Beidelman delivers a very clear picture of the indeterminacy and contingency that characterised the process of colonial rule at the local level. The competing agendas of different local actors interact unpredictably. The ones who obtain colonial endorsement carry the day, but they do not add up to the sort of civilising effort that expatriate officials liked to think they were involved in. To borrow Mamdani's phrase from his "Citizens and Subjects," official endorsement could create "decentralised despots," but had very little control over the despots' subsequent doings.

Note, though, that Beidelman's observations do not, to this reader's mind, bear out Mamdani's claim that decentralised despotism had deep roots in local culture. They do chime with Mamdani's insistence on the many continuities between late-colonial and independent politics. But the "Culture of Colonialism" of the title is a political and bureaucratic culture created by the colonial encounter, a set of practices and rhetorical tropes that are awkwardly patched together from pseudotraditional and modernising material. It seems that neither the survival of deep-rooted cultural forms of legitimacy nor grand modernising hopes hold it together, but rather everyday necessity, its role in the securing or expansion of livelihoods does.

This is, then, a very engaging and thought-provoking book. At times, the reader may find her-/himself wishing Beidelman had "cashed out" the many insights to be had from his material more explicitly. The author confesses early on to having, in his later judgment, been somewhat abrasive and judgmental in early encounters with colonial officials. He clearly came to understand the constraints and compulsions they laboured under better over time. Both impatience and sympathy with the actors on the colonial scene, with appointed chiefs, their underlings, and petitioners, but also with the British "men on the spot," are very much in evidence in his writing.

Yet when it comes to the generations of anthropologists and historians who have sought to make sense of the colonial experience since the time captured here, Beidelman appears to come down, on balance, on the side of impatience. He mentions early on that he was tempted to call this book of his "Take Me to Your Leader," but was talked out of it by colleagues who thought this title too irrever-

ent. He appears to begrudge his colleagues their strait-laced views, and perhaps the loss of this title really is to be deplored (the current reader certainly had an interesting time googling the phrase). But then, why not go with the preferred title and make a case for it? It seems at times a little bit as if Beidelman feels unhappily constrained by the conventions of his academic discipline.

This is true especially of anthropology's habitual attention to theory. For example, he just-about acknowledges Peter Pels' theoretically well-informed work on the Kaguru, but does not really engage with it. Beidelman appears most comfortable in the role of the hard-nosed empiricist – ironically, a very British pose. In fact, notwithstanding the critical distance Beidelman vividly recalls putting between himself and British colonial officials, he sounds at times a lot like a member of that group. In particular, he shares the tendency of such officials to explain events with reference to judgments of the character of African intermediaries, and he uses references to "modernisation," of the kind common in the late colonial period, fairly uncritically. It would have been interesting to see an explicit defence of late-colonial modernisers' assumptions, but with Beidelman, there is a feeling that he just can't quite be bothered to confront critics whom he probably finds rather predictable. This, too, makes him look oddly like his erstwhile research subjects.

Felicitas M. Becker

**Bouvier, Hélène, et Gérard Toffin** (éds.) : *Théâtres d'Asie à l'oeuvre*. Circulation, expression, politique. Paris : École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2012. 253 pp. ISBN 978-2-85539-146-5. (Études thématiques, 26) Prix : € 40,00

Cet ouvrage construit à partir d'une dizaine d'études anthropologiques questionne l'art de la scène en Asie. Introduit par un excellent état des lieux qui problématise les récentes perspectives et réflexions sur le théâtre, il cherche à présenter la richesse et la diversité de ses formes et de ses contenus tout en soulignant l'importance des fonctions qu'il a occupé par le passé et qu'il continue d'exercer au sein des sociétés complexes dans lesquelles il s'est développé. La multiplicité des cas d'études présentés n'est de loin pas exhaustive – comment l'être ? – mais réussit à rendre compte de la fabrique culturelle de genres théâtraux spécifiques et à porter l'attention avec nuance et subtilité sur les nombreux échanges religieux, intellectuels et artistiques à diverses échelles : globale (Orient-Occident), continentale (Asie), subcontinentale (Asie du Sud-Est), nationale, régionale et locale.

Les contributions de Gérard Toffin sur le théâtre religieux Indra Jātrā à Katmandou, Marianne Pasty sur le *mutiyēttu*, théâtre sacré au Kerala, Isabelle Henry-Dourcy sur le théâtre tibétain *ache Ihamo*, Stéphanie Khoury sur le théâtre rituel khmer *Ikhon khol* au Cambodge, Victoria Clara Van Groenendael sur le *wayang* javanais, Michel Picard sur l'indianisation de Bali par le théâtre, Hélène Bouvier sur les épopées indiennes dans le théâtre masqué madourais en Indonésie, Tùng Nguyễn et Nelly Krowolski sur le théâtre chanté *hát bội* au Vietnam, Catherine