

ography and an index. As with many Bloomsbury/Berg books, this volume unfortunately suffers considerably from the lack of images and all of those present being in black and white.

The book is intended to be an introduction to the subject of religious dress rather than an in-depth study of one particular form. It looks at both men and women's religious dress, although there is a gentle bias towards the latter. The book offers tantalizing information about a wide range of subjects from nakedness (India; 101 f.) to ornate liturgical and ceremonial garments (Catholic; 13–23). There are also items about garments that may not be initially regarded as religious (such as the sari; 80–84), but in fact there is a strong, religious element to their forms and use. In addition to individual items of clothing and outfits, attention is also paid to dress accessories such as hairstyles, henna, jewellery, perfume (Catholic) prayer beads, etc.

There are some obvious lacunae in the book, for example, although there is a long discussion about Catholic dress and non-Conformist Christian groups, Protestants, and notably the worldwide Anglican Community are dismissed in a single paragraph (28). Nor is there a mention about Mormons (Church of the Latter Day Saints), although this community deliberately use dress (both outer and under garments) to confirm their membership of this particular group and to show the world who they are. Another slight irritation was that in the section on Sufis there is a long description on the whirling Dervish, but within this there is only one paragraph on the garments worn and over a page on the their rituals and dance (128–130).

Basically, the book is a very interesting and readable introduction to the concepts behind function(s) of and appearance of religious dress in general. The bibliography means it is possible to go deeper into various subjects. As an interested reader with some knowledge about the subject I was left wanting more and wondering what happened in this situation or under those circumstances, and so forth. But it is not the stated intention of this book to cover these and other matters, instead it is designed to pique a student's curiosity and it certainly achieves this aim.

Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood

Iberoamericana. América Latina – España – Portugal. Vol. 14, Núm. 55. (Dossier “Earthquakes in Latin America and Their Social, Political, and Cultural Consequences”; pp. 97–177.) Madrid: Iberoamericana Editorial Vervuert, 2014. ISSN 1577-3388.

In October 2013, the Institute of Latin American Studies in Berlin auspiced a conference called: “Earthquakes in Latin America – Their Social, Political, and Cultural Consequences.” This review is about the dossier published in *Iberoamericana* by Iberoamericana Editorial Vervuert in 2014 as a result of the conference.

Before briefly sketching the individual contributions to the dossier, allow me to remark on the importance of the issue – disasters and their consequences – and on how rarely it is taken into account by the social sciences; a very surprising fact, considering the severe impacts gen-

erally resulting from disasters, especially in the political, social, economic, and cultural sphere the dossier is focused on. Therefore, the initiative undertaken by the Institute of Latin American Studies is to be appreciated and hopefully contributes to improve the awareness for disaster impacts and their social and cultural determinant, at the same time contributing to a more precise conception of disasters and its causes.

The dossier consists of an introduction and five articles, each of them dealing with one or several aspects of the political, economic, social, and cultural consequences in several Latin American countries at different historical moments.

In an introductory article, Oliver Gleich reminds us of the consequences that may result from earthquakes, in some cases leading to a turning point in the history of a country. He defines the societies of those countries as “risk societies” and proposes a framework to analyze disasters with regard to the following factors: *time*, as the impact of earthquakes changes with temporal distance; *mental and cultural consequences, economic life*, as disaster often has an adverse impact on a country's economy; *demography, migration, and urbanistics*, as changes in demographic patterns have consequences on the exposure to risks; the *social dimension* that implies different risk exposure and disaster impacts for different social segments of a society, and finally the *political consequences* that disaster impacts may have.

Basically, the proposed analytical framework will be helpful, but it is not complete. It lacks, for example, the important concepts of disaster prevention and the reasons for its failures. In my concluding remarks, I will briefly outline a different perspective to analyze earthquakes and their impacts.

The first article, by Marialba Pastor, focuses on the notion of earthquakes in the colonial period. The author provides us with a fine story and analysis about how earthquakes have been explained in colonial times, by the powerful as well as by the general public, and how towards the end of the colony explanations changed hesitantly. Basically, earthquakes and other disasters for hundreds of years were explained as God's punishment for people's bad behavior and the sins they committed. The author concludes that in contrast to the radical changes in Europe during the 18th century, where comprehension of nature and its phenomena changed towards scientific explanations, modernity in Spanish America could not catch up because the underlying roots of the medieval model, the sacralization of the world by religion, and the close entanglement of state and religion in the Spanish colonial society remained untouched.

The second article, by Pablo Buchbinder, is quite interesting in its focus on possible political impacts of earthquakes and disaster attention. Buchbinder analyzes the political and social changes in the wake of the San Juan earthquake in Argentina in 1944. The quake, of the magnitude of 7.8 on the Richter scale, virtually wiped out the city of 100,000 inhabitants, built of adobe and dried mud houses. Juan Perón, the then very dynamic secretary of work and social prevention, emerged as the lead-

ing figure in centralizing and organizing the aid for the victims. Due to his performance in handling the consequences of the earthquake, his popularity among the lower social classes rose significantly and was an important factor for shaping his image as a national leader. He could harvest the fruits in 1946 when he was elected President of Argentina.

The disaster not only produced political consequences but in all its brutality revealed the social abyss running through the Argentine society. In the decades immediately before the earthquake, a ruthless process of peasant expropriation around San Juan swept more and more impoverished people into the town, where they lived in mud huts, meanwhile there dispossessors lived in wealthy houses built of earthquake proof material or moved out of town to their country estates. One of the earthquakes' consequences was a new building and housing policy implemented by the central state, paying more attention to earthquake-resistant buildings and considering housing the right of every citizen. Therefore, the destruction of the earthquake changed the concept of the role of the state and its social policies and served as an experimental field for the new policy.

The third contribution, by Vicente Albornoz and Daniela Anda, concerns the social and economic results of an earthquake in Ecuador in 1987. This quake was not especially strong (6.9 points on Richter scale), but caused landslides killing approximately one thousand people and destroying some 70 kilometers of the Trans-Ecuadorian Oil Pipeline, causing economic losses in 1987 that were equal to 7% of the country's Gross National Product. In order to control the physical and economic impact of the quake, the government decided to increase its money printing, thus triggering a huge inflation, which reached 99% in early 1989. Albornoz and Anda present a typical case of a relatively weak natural phenomenon triggering an enormous economic, social, and political disaster, due to a severe lack of disaster prevention and a poor impact management.

Liliana Mayer in her contribution focuses on the social dimensions of disasters. Her example is the Chilean earthquake of 2010 and its consequences, especially with regard to the peculiar schooling system in Chile. Characterized by a mix of private and public schools regulated through a voucher system, according to which every pupil receives an individual voucher for the payment of the school fees and may choose the school he or she prefers, the system sounds good in theory. In practice, the system revealed its weakness in the aftermath of the quake. The central government burdened part of the responsibility to reduce risks onto the local level institutions, including schools and the social communities supporting them. Richer areas were much better able to cope with the new tasks than poorer ones, due to parents with more time and resources. Schools in poor areas lost pupils and with them part of their resources, lowering the educational standards even more and consequently deepening social inequality.

In the 5th article, Marisol Palma Behnke takes a historic perspective on earthquakes in Chile, focused on collective and individual memories. The author quotes eyewit-

ness accounts from colonial times, describing the events and their impacts as apocalypse, seeking the explication for the disaster in God's rage about the sinful ways of humankind. In Chile, like in other Latin-American countries, people sought consolation and protection in Jesus, the Saints, and the Holy Cross. Very famous in Chile is the Cristo de Mayo, emerging out of the collective memory around the quake of 1647. The author interprets this kind of memory as construction and manipulation of collective cognitive processes, which in colonial times were used basically for social control. In the 19th century, the notion of God's rage slowly gave way to a more scientific perception and finally in the 20th and 21st centuries people's memories focus on the real event, its impact and the perception of community and identity. Palma Behnke states that "[t]he earthquake converted into a symbol penetrates the identity of the nascent national community in a transversal manner – with the same or more power than war" (175, translation by the author).

What the reader can expect from the dossier is a better understanding of the changing interpretation of earthquakes (and other natural phenomenon) in different epochs of Latin-American history, how this interpretations helped and helps to control societies politically and socially, how a phenomenon that triggers disaster can have huge impacts on the economy, the social structure, and the political processes of a given country. It also becomes clear that earthquakes and other natural phenomena need to be investigated much more sorely by the social sciences.

Generally, phenomena triggering disasters are perceived as *natural* disasters and it is exactly this notion, as widespread as it is, that obscures the underlying causes of disasters. In a footnote of his introduction, Oliver Gleich states that "[t]he notion of *risk society* has been introduced by the German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1986/2007) with reference to man-made risks typical for industrial societies. There are good reasons to apply his terminology to societies living under the permanent threat of natural disasters" (98).

I could not agree more with Gleich when he proposes to call risk societies those who live under permanent threat of hazards, but in opposition to him I would apply this terminology for the very same reason: because these risks are *man-made*, they are *social constructions*, emerging from political, economic, and social relations in a given society. There is no such thing as a "natural disaster." Nature does not produce disasters, it produces phenomena. Social sciences have to understand the full dimension of this point in order to analyze the causes of disasters activated by natural phenomena like earthquakes and others and get to a true understanding. For example: The poor segments of a society nearly always suffer much more severely from disasters than the more affluent ones. This fact is not produced by nature, but reveals itself quite "naturally" with an analysis perspective of disasters as product of the social construction of a society rather than a consequence of nature and its phenomena. If a society or an inept regime is not capable of an adequate territorial and urban planning, if it fails to develop and implement

norms for earthquake resistant construction, if it fails to provide basic social services and so on, it is very convenient to blame nature for its disasters. Science should not fall to that trap.

The fact that we still use to talk about “natural disasters” reveals the important role natural phenomena continue to play in the manipulation of power relations and control of societies. In this sense, the current dossier is a very useful and important contribution to the discussion about disasters and their consequences, even if it is but a tiny step, and considerably more investigation, especially by social sciences, is necessary.

Harald Mossbrucker

Ingold, Tim, and Gisli Palsson (eds.): Biosocial Becomings. Integrating Social and Biological Anthropology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 281 pp. ISBN 978-1-107-02563-9. Price: £ 55.00

The authors of “Biosocial Becomings” are trying to overcome the European dualistic style of thinking, which splits the world into binary domains such as nature – culture or biology – and society. Science and humanities stood on the dualism for centuries; a division of anthropology is a proof of that. The essays included in the book demonstrate how the European thinking is deeply trapped in the dualism of this type. The texts also document the way the European thinking is characterised by inclination to divide the world to sets of independent entities, such as individual humans and animals, which are separable from their environments and from a world as such. Anthropologist Tim Ingold illustrates this in his introductory chapter “Prospect.” He devoted it, among others issues, to an analysis of concept of “human being.” It connotes an idea of a human as an independent entity, because the noun is derived from the verb “to be,” which is often used for a definition (human is ...). In addition, we give to humans different positions in the order of nature by the phrase “human being.” Why do we not use a similar phrase such as “elephant being” or “mouse being”?

According to the authors, our thoughts remain trapped in the idea of the world as if consisting of discrete units, such as organisms or machines. The authors of “Biosocial Becomings” emphasise that we have to rethink the concept of naturalness of biological processes in the light of new technologies and medical procedures. There are such issues as assisted reproduction, egg or sperm donation, and surrogate motherhood. Is it even possible to keep dividing line between human and machine or man and woman?

The authors argue that we are determined neither by nature nor culture, but humanity is rising and developing during lifetime by various effects. According to the authors, it is appropriate to think about human life as a process of “biosocial becoming.” The humans should be conceived as “Biosocial Becomings.” The authors are of the opinion that the premise that humans are evolutionary finished and closed organic systems, which are just reproducing, is just wrong. The same is true of culture, which is as “that complex whole” gradually installed to

the body since its birth. This assumptions are rooted in 19th-century thinking of the skin as a boundary of organism; the skin separates organism from environment, which affect the organism. Part of the environment is also a culture, which is exogamous in regard to individual organism. The authors work with many examples demonstrating that humans are inseparable from their environment and that bodily boundaries of humans are floating. Noa Vaisman (chap. 6), for example, analysed the case in the Supreme Court of Argentina regarding the biological identity of a young man who was kidnapped as a child. He refused to be tested. The Court ruled that his identity can be determined by testing shed-DNA collected in his home. Where is then a boundary of the individual and his identity? This and others examples are a challenge for thinking in dichotomies, on which European science, social science, and humanities are based for centuries.

The book addresses many interesting issues. For instance, the authors argue that sociobiology and evolutionary psychology stand on tautology, because its representatives define culture by culture itself. Evolutionary social sciences build upon an assumption that culture has to be “pre-installed” in our minds, since capacity for learning culture is one of the results of biological evolution. The authors insist that this sociobiological or evolutionary psychological assumption is a form of essentialism. Everyone is born into a culture, which he or she, thanks for “pre-installed” mental disposition, acquires by non-genetic transmission. For the model to work well, it is assumed that cultural diversity is but a phenotypic expression of universal principles, on which every culture is based. In other words, there cannot be a culture based on different principles than any others. Were it otherwise, we could not acquire this culture at all, it would be like an attempt to install an operating system on an unsuitable platform.

The authors are convinced that the style of thinking in units (single species, organisms etc.) is rooted in Neo-Darwinism, which operates with units as to be externally distinctive and internally homogenous. The authors consider Neo-Darwinism old-fashioned. Tim Ingold even begins his introductory chapter with an allusion to Friedrich Nietzsche: “Neo-Darwinism is dead” (1). The connotation of a dead God is pertinent, because many scholars worship Darwinism as an idol. A recent discussion within evolutionary theory is interesting within this context. Edward O. Wilson and some others scientists reawaken the idea of group selection as a part of processes called multilevel selection, which Wilson recently popularised in the books “The Social Conquest of the Earth” (New York 2013) and “The Meaning of Human Existence” (New York 2014). The idea provoked a stormy reaction from Richard Dawkins and some others. In any case, it seems that paradigm is now shifting.

The essays included in the book are highly informative and inspiring. I am pleased that the authors actually build upon an interdisciplinary approach. The texts are based not only on findings and theories of social and biological anthropology, but the authors also benefit from various concepts of philosophy, psychology, and other scientific