

sis, chapter 2 (“Rowshan: Chitral Village Life”) gives an overview of one of the two sites of fieldwork. Chapter 3 (“Emotions Upside Down: Affection and Islam in Present Day Rowshan”) insightfully explores the complexity of moral valuation, judgements, and conflicts depicting the area of Rowshan in upper Chitral as a contested moral space.

In chapter 4 (“The Play of the Mind: Debating Village Muslims”), the author analyses the complex of thought and discussion in village life, dimensions predominantly associated with men, but also powerfully influenced by women in view of the growing level of literacy and education. The next chapter entitled “*Mahfils* and Musicians: New Muslims in Markaz” is a very important one focusing on aesthetic visions of Muslim life, such as poetry, music, dance, joking, and comical impersonations, which contest puritanical versions of Islam through shere joy of life. In fact, Chitral has a distinct musical tradition renowned throughout the whole of northern Pakistan. Chapter 6 (“Scholars and Scoundrels: Rowshan’s Amulet-making *ulama*”) differentiates the often monodimensional views of rigid Islamic scholars and their alleged Taliban-style “brainwashing” in *madrasas* (religious schools). People in Chitral perceive the effects of this education ambivalently as a source of respect on the one hand, but also having the potential of “narrowing the mind” (177). This chapter also includes an insightful exploration into amulet-making by religious scholars which could have been enlivened by concrete examples of amulets written on paper (about their actual content, the way of folding the pieces of paper, etc.).

The last ethnographic chapter (“To Eat or Not to Eat? Ismailis and Sunnis in Rowshan”) deals with the multifaceted relations between both “doctrinal clusters” in Chitral, with their shared experiences as well as sometimes serious conflicts. Marsden shows that plural Muslim life and the drawing of distinct sectarian boundaries are problematic, needing constant striving, while at the same time creating anxieties in both communities. The cultural domains described and analysed in this study outline rural “lived Islam” in Chitral. They could have been supplemented by a further chapter on annual religious festivals. The book is rounded off by a lengthy conclusion (chapter 8) written in a self-confident style.

Although this is a laudable monograph offering new perspectives, I do have reservations. First, the geographical reference in the subtitle focusing on “Pakistan’s North-West Frontier” is no doubt politically correct (and also serving widespread interest in the colonial legacy of this well-known region among an English-speaking readership), but nevertheless misleading insofar as Chitral is part of a different cultural area, belonging namely to the Dards (see Karl Jettmar: Kafiren, Nuristani, Darden. Zur Klärung des Begriffssystems. *Anthropos* 77.1982: 254–263), a term strikingly nowhere mentioned in the book. As Marsden rightly points out, the political culture of Chitral considerably differs from the neighbouring tribal Pakhtun (13 f.). Nevertheless, beyond the context of Chitral, the author does not relate his work to the ethnography of neighbouring central Asian, respectively, northern

Pakistani ethnic groups, but to the broader Muslim world. Thus, what I miss is a discussion of comparable cultural traits in the Hindukush and Karakoram.

A quick statistical look at the author’s immense bibliography helps to shed some light on this desideratum: Out of the more than 500 entries only 38 deal with northern Pakistan in particular, only 20 are sources published before the year 1970, and there is only one title in the German language. Had Marsden consulted, for instance, Irmtraud Stellrecht’s comprehensive “Bibliography – Northern Pakistan” (Köln 1998), he would have found more than 400 entries concerning the area of Chitral alone. There is not even a general footnote reference to the long tradition of German, Danish, Austrian, and Italian scholarship in this region. Thus, important works, such as the masterful lifework of the doyen of Hindukush research, the late Karl Jettmar, “Die Religionen des Hindukusch” (Stuttgart 1975), which contains a long chapter on the religious traditions of the Kho (413–459), or Alberto and Augusto Cacopardo’s recently published “Gates of Peristan. History, Religion, and Society in the Hindu Kush” (Rome 2001), are ignored with bravado.

Jürgen Wasim Frembgen

Merry, Sally Engle: Human Rights and Gender Violence. Translating International Law into Local Justice. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006. 269 pp. ISBN 0-226-52074-9. Price: \$ 20.00

With its tradition of cultural relativism, even if that is more a methodological than an ethical position, anthropology has generally struggled with the powerful idea of the universality of human rights. If human rights are applicable, and identical, everywhere, where does this leave the concept of culture, so central to American anthropology at least? Merry shows that in the world of human rights commissions and NGOs, culture is generally seen as a barrier to human rights, either in its forms as “tradition” or as “national essence,” and mobilized by governments and local leaders to justify their maltreatment of women and other marginalized groups. More contemporary anthropological approaches to culture as contested, internally heterogeneous, and changing, even when change is phrased in the form of claims about what is traditional. Furthermore, transnational human rights elites neglect their own distinctive cultural practices, carefully studied by Merry in their own terrain of UN meeting rooms and conferences. As Merry states, a more dynamic perspective on culture “recognizes its capacity to innovate, appropriate, and create local practices. This understanding of culture challenges those who claim that reforms violate their culture at the same time as it encourages activists to take seriously meaning and practice within local contexts” (228).

This is an important book that should receive extensive attention. It moves beyond some of the classic conundrums around anthropological treatments of human rights by concentrating on the ways in which human rights are remade in the vernacular, translated into forms that can be understood locally, and resituated within

local contexts of meaning and power. It does this by distinguishing different layers in the human rights processes, from transnational elites who work effectively in the global terrain of rights making, down to local complainants who are trying to resolve personal problems like an abusive husband or unfair inheritance practices. The process of translation goes both ways. "Thought of as human rights violations, local problems become issues that a global audience can understand" (227). Often this leads to distortions and superficial interpretations of complex issues that may not further social justice, such as proposals to ban village mediation in Fiji because it is sometimes abused in being applied to cases of rape. In the other direction, effective translators can help local people with grievances recast their problems in ways that compel responses by national legislators and courts. Merry shows, however, that when human rights programs and ideas are translated into local cultural terms, this occurs at a superficial level. They are appropriated and translated but are not indigenized, because to "blend completely with the surrounding social world is to lose the radical possibilities of human rights. It is the unfamiliarity of these ideas that makes them effective in breaking old modes of thought" (178). The novelty of the ideas in this book, and the clarity with which they are presented, should do the same.

While the book as a whole is exciting, not all of the pages are quite as fascinating. The examination in chapter 3 of the work of creating and negotiating human rights in the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" can become a bit mind-numbing, but that seems to be an accurate reflection of the actual process itself, where many hours by many people are devoted to the nuances of particular phrases. Overall, the book makes major contributions not simply to studies of human rights and gender violence, but also to our knowledge of law, globalization, culture, and power in a world where transcultural ideas have an important capacity to promote change, but only through the processes by which they are mobilized, translated, and appropriated.

Alan Smart

Morris, Brian: *Religion and Anthropology. A Critical Introduction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 350 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-61779-6. Price: £ 16.99

Brian Morris has once again provided students and teachers of the anthropology of religion with a highly readable, erudite text. It could equally form the basis of an undergraduate or masters course, or provide an introduction to the scope of ethnographic and theoretical interests and approaches to religion. Morris's 1987 textbook, "Anthropological Studies of Religion" (Cambridge), an invaluable reference source of theories, authors, and ethnographic works, was probably read more by those teaching the subject than by undergraduates. "Religion and Anthropology," however, is more approachable, inviting the uninitiated into the sometimes arcane world of academic writing and scholarship.

After a brief summary of the various approaches to religion that formed the basis of his earlier work (intellectualist, emotionalist, structuralist, interpretive, cognitive, phenomenological, and sociological), Morris focuses on the sociological approach, which he rightly identifies as the dominant trend in anthropological studies of religion, at least within the British tradition. It was also this approach, according to Morris, that has most successfully combined anthropology's dual heritage as an interpretive and scientific discipline. The approach taken in "Religion and Anthropology" is regional, thematic, and ethnographic and, inevitably in a book that takes the whole world as its remit, eclectic in its choice of material. Not surprisingly, the subject matter reflects the particular interests and expertise that Morris has developed over a long and distinguished career, including, for instance, strong chapters on the relationship between Christianity and African traditions, and on Paganism, New Age religions, and Western esotericism. At first glance the volume looks a little like a religious studies text, with several of the world's major religious traditions treated to separate entities, but Morris's intention is clearly neither to explicate the theologies of the various traditions nor to present a rounded or balanced picture of their beliefs and practices. Rather, he uses ethnographic studies to illustrate some of the ways in which religion within these traditions is lived out, claiming that anthropology is "unique among the human sciences in both putting an emphasis and value on cultural difference, thus offering a cultural critique of Western capitalism and its culture, and in emphasizing people's shared humanity, thus enlarging our sense of moral community and placing humans squarely 'within nature'" (2).

The adjective "critical" in the subtitle could well refer to Morris's scathing comments on various forms of postmodern theorising, that have become detached from their empiricist roots, often appearing as nothing more than an unreflective mouthpiece for certain forms of Western capitalism. While justly criticising writers who caricature the theoretical positions of their forebears, Morris might well accept in that he is at times in danger of doing the same for "postmodernism." Many of the critiques of the anthropological method Johannes Fabian and others preached in the late 1970s and early 1980s, for instance, have been quietly accepted and absorbed into the academic mainstream. Not all anthropologists who describe themselves or their work as postmodernist believe that all life is a text, that all ethnography is autobiography, or all "truths" are fictions (although some may).

The ten chapters in "Religion and Anthropology" look at Shamanism, Buddhism and Spirit-Cults, Islam and Popular Religion, Hinduism and New Religious Movements, Christianity and Religion in Africa, African-American Religions, Religions in Melanesia, and Neopaganism and the New Age Movement. If the intention were to be comprehensive geographically or in its coverage of religious traditions there would be some obvious gaps (Judaism, Confucianism, Shinto, Sikhism and many other traditions get no mention, and Australia is unrepresented as a geographical region). The intention is not,