

hecho que una investigación sincrónica es una especie de “instantánea”, y que sólo a través de repetidas investigaciones a lo largo de un extenso período temporal es posible percibir las diferencias existentes entre las versiones.)

Si bien no existen bibliografías sin lagunas ni autores que no se mencionan, aunque hubiera sido necesario, es de lamentar que en la obra de Goody no haya una recepción de Jan Assmann, quien también tiene tras de sí una dedicación a temas similares, aunque a partir de otras regiones y épocas, y que llega en cuanto a este aspecto a conclusiones diferentes a las suyas. (Por lo demás, no existe aquí recepción de ninguna investigación publicada en alemán, a lo cual ya nos han acostumbrado a la fuerza la mayoría de los autores anglosajones.) Los resultados de las investigaciones de Goody entran en colisión con la perspectiva de Jan Assmann, para quien, en culturas orales, la repetición es una necesidad estructural, ya que sin ella el proceso de la tradicionalización se derrumbaría, lo cual implicaría el olvido (“*Wiederholung ist hier kein Problem, sondern eine strukturelle Notwendigkeit. Ohne Wiederholung bricht der Prozess der Überlieferung zusammen. Innovation würde Vergessen bedeuten*”; Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. München 2000: 98, cursivas de J. A.). Frente a este concepto esencialista de la narración oral de los mitos, que no deben ni pueden cambiar para seguir siendo vigentes, Goody muestra que los cambios son intrínsecos en la oralidad, y justamente esto define su creatividad. Por el contrario, sería la escritura la que actúa sobre la memorización: recitar “de memoria” parece ser una característica de culturas con escritura (153).

Las conclusiones de Goody con respecto a las formas de recitación de este texto africano son para tener seriamente en cuenta con respecto a otras regiones y culturas. Cabe preguntarse, por ejemplo, si son aplicables y en qué medida a culturas orales de América del Sur o de Nueva Guinea, aunque no cabe esperar que se trate de “universales” presentes en todas las culturas orales. Pero aún estamos lejos de disponer de suficientes investigaciones a nivel diacrónico y, aún más, de una comparativística entre estas regiones que permitiera responder a este interrogante.

El valor de esta obra reside sobre todo en haber reunido artículos publicados en medios muy diferentes y a lo largo de más de medio siglo, que inspiran a seguir reflexionando sobre estos temas. El lector interesado específicamente en las características del relato del origen de los LoDagaa deberá recurrir además a las publicaciones específicas (Goody and Gandah [eds.], *Une récitation du Bagré*. Paris 1981; *A Myth Revisited. The Third Bagre*. Durham 2002).

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Grandits, Hannes (ed.): *Family, Kinship, and State in Contemporary Europe. Vol. 1: The Century of Welfare. Eight Countries*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2010. 412 pp. ISBN 978-3-593-38961-5. Price: € 45.00

Heady, Patrick, and Peter Schweitzer (eds.): *Family, Kinship, and State in Contemporary Europe. Vol. 2:*

The View from Below. Nineteen Localities. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2010. 505 pp. ISBN 978-3-593-38962-2. Price: € 45.00

The two volumes reviewed here are part of a three volume series (entitled “Family, Kinship and State in Contemporary Europe”) that explores European kinship and social security at a moment of massive political, economic, and demographic transformation. Funded mostly by the European Union under its 6th framework research program (Kinship and Social Security or KASS), the first two volumes of this impressive interdisciplinary, multinational project ask how family and kinship networks manage and provide mutual assistance in the post-welfare era, particularly vis-à-vis aging family members and children. Both volumes answer this question by boldly intervening into debates usually left to economists, sociologists, and political scientists.

The aim, as stated by the overall editor Patrick Heady, is to complicate prevailing theories that all too often treat family and kinship as epiphenomenal to larger economic and political forces – that is to say, as mere effects of modernization (where new forms of economic life generate increased individualization) or as reactions to different welfare regimes (which provide different incentives to families who react, correspondingly, with something that approximates economic rationality). Both volumes counter such economic and political determinism with a range of studies that demonstrate that it is people’s culturally and historically specific perceptions, thoughts, motives, and feelings regarding family and care, shaped by but not reducible to larger systems and institutions that ultimately offer a central key towards understanding kinship and care in post-welfare Europe today. Surveying Italy, Sweden, Germany, France, Austria, Croatia, Poland, and Russia, the case studies contained in these two volumes expertly historicize and culturally embed the great diversity of care networks that currently exist across Europe – a diversity that has replaced the relatively uniform European landscape of family, marriage, and childbearing patterns that existed until the 1970s and that hinged on the almost universal prevalence of full male employment and the stability of marriage.

Hannes Grandits introduces the case studies in Vol. 1 with the compelling argument that culture is not something found merely on the local level, engrained in the minuteness of everyday kinship practices, but instead also something that can be found at the heart of welfare state making itself. The building of 20th-century welfare states was, after all, ideologically mediated in that these projects entailed individual historical “cultures” of kinship that animated and continue to animate not just the (re)production of private but public life as well. The national level studies presented in this volume expertly draw on existing sources of historical, sociological, and demographic data, while the case studies presented in Vol. 2 are based on original ethnographic research that was conducted by research teams in nineteen urban and rural localities in the eight countries mentioned above. While these local ethnographic studies are to be read as corollaries to the national studies presented in Vol. 1, the goal of “Family, Kinship

and State in Contemporary Europe” was to also allow for comparability (an issue discussed with nuance by Patrick Heady in his introduction to Vol. 2) across this wide range of localities. Researchers were thus asked to cover common themes, including prevailing ideas about reciprocity, altruism, and self-interest; symbolism and ritual; and the impact of economic and administrative forces on families. Researchers were also instructed to collect quantitative data about interactions between relatives (with the help of a new computer program, the “Kinship Network Questionnaire,” specifically designed for this purpose), thus offering an alternative means for comparing patterns of cooperation between different categories of kin. The diversity of methods used in “Family, Kinship and State in Contemporary Europe” seemed to have been productive not only because it allowed for historically and culturally grounded case studies to be thoughtfully set within a comparative frame. They were productive also because the comparison of quantitative questionnaire data with qualitative ethnographic research sometimes revealed slippages between official ideologies of care voiced by informants (who had been directly influenced by state discourse, as Gaunt and Marks, for example, describe for the Swedish case) and actual everyday practice.

Taken together, the first two volumes of “Family, Kinship and State in Contemporary Europe” are not only meticulously researched but also unparalleled in their breadth and depth. The series will become an important reference work for anyone interested in one of the most pressing issues facing Europe today – the question of care in an era of economic, political, and familial crisis. What is at stake is both substantive and methodological in that the series’ unique contributions with regards to the transformation of kinship arrangements and mutual assistance in postwelfare Europe are paired with the productivity of combining multiple (quantitative and qualitative) kinds and several (national and local) scales of information.

Andrea Muehlebach

Grimes, Ronald L., Ute Hüsken, Udo Simon, and Eric Venbrux (eds.): *Ritual, Media, and Conflict*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 299 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-973554-9. Price: £ 18.99

This is an interesting and valuable book produced by an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars in ritual studies. With grants from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research and the German Research Foundation, the group of 24 scholars was able to sustain their collaborations over a period of two years at the Radboud University Nijmegen and the University of Heidelberg. The group was drawn mostly from anthropology and religion studies, with a few participants from languages, literature, classics, and elsewhere in the humanities. They focused their attention on a series of case studies drawn to test and elaborate ideas about the relationships among ritual, media, and conflict in a wide range of world cultures, political settings, and media situations. What a special opportunity!

The result is this coherent yet diverse collection of

nine chapters, seven based on case studies plus opening and closing statements by Ronald Grimes and Michael Houseman respectively. Each of the case study chapters follows this form: two to four coauthors from different national academies and usually different fields of study, address two or three case studies, also selected from different national settings, institutional domains, media forms, etc. The authors open each chapter with theoretical statements and a brief review of relevant literature, identify the key points of contrast for their case studies, and then examine each case on its own. Each chapter closes with lessons drawn from comparison across the cases. The opening and closing chapters of the book aim for more general theoretical points, attempting to offer some lessons from across the cases.

Grimes’ opening chapter works around the triangle of ritual, media, and conflict, examining each from the perspective of the other and inviting the reader to see them as equals in dynamic relation. He admits, though, that the authors represented here “collaborated less on the basis of our knowledge of either media or conflict than on our research into ritual” (5). It shows. While the book is fascinating and valuable, it is a shame they did not recruit some communication and media scholars into their group, or devote more time to the extant literature (some of it does appear in a couple of the chapters). In fact, media and ritual is a mature area of study in communication with a rich literature now 30 or more years old, with established paradigms, counter proposals, and a thick empirical literature. The whole project would have benefitted from more contact with that work.

It was good to see that the concept of mediatization did receive some discussion in the opening and closing chapters and occasional mention through the body of the book. This concept, the most important work on which has been done in Germany, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries from which most of the authors here derive, identifies the institutional and historical processes by which the logics and forms of media gain influence in other institutional spheres, ranging from family life to politics, education to art to business and entertainment. This is obviously of key relevance to the study of the relations of ritual and media. Even so, the engagement with that literature is rather thin; few of the original sources are cited. Of equal relevance are the literatures on media events, ceremonial media, religion and media, media ritual, and ritual communication. The literature on media and conflict is huge and varied too, though rather less my own area of expertise. Peculiarly, even the burgeoning literature on media anthropology is mostly left out of discussion, though most of us would count this book as an example of that trend.

That all aside, is it still a good book? Is it interesting and valuable in its own ways? Yes. What we see here is a fairly purely anthropological approach to the articulation of ritual in the contemporary world where media are primary means of public communication and conflict a predominant reality. There was an unusually sustained engagement that produced an unusually coherent edited volume. We see then important conceptual materials, clas-