

Feldhaus puts it, “caste in the *ovis* involves at least as complex a set of attitudes and practices as it does in real life” (94). This is an entirely reasonable observation, but it remains an open research question how, if at all, *ovi* performances themselves have impacted the real-life political and economic struggles of the Dhangars as a caste in contemporary India. Addressing this issue might perhaps help to explain why, as Feldhaus was surprised to find, one of the *ovi* performers (Dāji Rāmā Pokale) broke out of the storytelling frame and became critical of his own community for not being progressive enough (107). As I will explain below, the circumstances of its publication understandably prevented such fieldwork from being integrated into this book, but it is a desideratum if we are to grasp how performance culture does or does not play an active role in the lives of Dhangars today.

In the fifth and final chapter, Feldhaus turns to one other fascinating aspect of the *ovis* – the construction of gender identities and the development of female-centered themes, such as fertility, virginity, and lactation. Though the stories are known to Dhangar women, the two recordings were performed by men, and with only men present. Feldhaus thus discerns a consistent male “stamp” in the *ovi* performances, in which misogynistic stereotypes are used for comedic effect. She details a number of incidents of slapstick domestic violence in the *ovis*, where the target of the joke is the simple-minded shepherd who unfairly beats his wife. Here, as Feldhaus puts it, “although the artists are indeed making light of denigration of and violence toward women, what they are primarily making fun of is themselves – or at least, their own kind” (116).

The two translated *ovis*, which comprise the bulk of the volume, are an absorbing read. The “Story of Birobā” is a recording of four singers made by Sontheimer over four nights (7.5 hours of tape) at a shepherd village in the Sangli district of southern Maharashtra, while the longer “Story of Dhuḷobā” (12.5 hours) was sung by a solo performer from Satara, who had travelled to Sontheimer’s residence in Pune. Feldhaus and her collaborators give us an excellent example of how one might effectively translate oral performances such as these without overburdening them with notes or technical apparatus. In the “Story of Birobā,” for example, the oration of the lead singers is presented in normal typeface, while the back singers’ voices are placed in smallcaps. The result is a rather elegant reconstruction of the dialogicality of live performance. Ample footnotes are given to explain linguistic and cultural peculiarities in the *ovis*, but rarely are there more than two or three per page, so as not to distract the reader from the stories themselves.

In closing, it is perhaps worth discussing what exactly these texts are, and whether we are to think of them as “authentic” Dhangar *ovis*. All translations are, by definition, simulacra of the original texts. However, there is another degree of temporal remove in this translation – the recordings were made in the early 1970s of performers who are now deceased, by a German scholar who is himself also deceased. As Feldhaus notes, she and her collaborators thus had no way of interviewing the performers or the audience, and had to rely primarily on the memories

of Atkar and Zagade, who were present at the recording sessions as research assistants, to reconstruct the original performance contexts. Furthermore, these days, it seems, the pressure of Indian popular culture has made it so that “no one is interested in singing *ovis* anymore” (14). We may surmise, therefore, that the *ovis* published in this book do not impact the daily lives of Dhangars today as they did forty years ago. This should not, however, take anything away from the merits of this publication. As with other vulnerable minority groups around the world, the cultural identity of the Dhangars has become somewhat of a political football, and rarely, it seems, are Dhangar voices heard within mainstream cultural settings without some sort of political orchestration. Thus, while these Dhangar *ovis* are indeed snapshots from a bygone era, their publication in a scholarly setting offers general readers in India and abroad – and perhaps the Dhangars themselves – an opportunity to hear traditional Dhangar voices from the past, on their own terms and in rich and luxurious detail, and to appreciate the distinctive religious culture that had been cultivated through this Dhangar oral tradition. Adheesh Sathaye

**Frembgen, Jürgen Wasim:** The Arts and Crafts of the Hunza Valley in Pakistan. Living Traditions in the Karakoram. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2017. 110 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-940520-6. Price: Pak Rs. 1,425.00

“Dedicated to the people of Hunza and Nager, especially to the female embroiderers and craftsmen,” this book is a most welcome new publication about Hunza in northernmost Pakistan – a wide valley deep inside the majestic mountain world of the western Karakoram. The construction of the KKH, the Karakoram Highway, leading from central Pakistan through the Indus Valley and then through the Hunza Valley and across the high Khunjerab Pass to Kashgar in Xinjiang, had made the previously difficult and risky access (with pathways and then jeepable tracks running often high up on very steep mountain slopes) to that of a highway. In due course, Hunza became a touristic paradise (and a thoroughfare for transit between Pakistan and China) and easily accessible for researchers. Nowadays approach is risky due to threats by Taliban, but once there one can feel safe and free to enjoy both the dramatic beauties of the unique landscape with its grandiose mountain peaks and the two somewhat different cultural entities found on the two sides of the valley, the one facing south, the other facing north.

There is a cultural chasm between the two valley sides based on differences in the Islamic belief systems, as the inhabitants of the northern half adhere to the (comparatively liberal) Ismaeli creed while the southern half, known as Nager, is dominated by (rather stern) Twelver Shia beliefs with their lack of much tolerance towards its opposite. However, both sides speak mainly Burushaski (an archaic, still “unclassified” idiom), and religious differences do not hinder the great passion for polo, played mainly by the social elite on fields which are constructed large enough, a difficult undertaking on mountain slopes, to provide sufficient space for a game with horses.

Nager has ample reason to envy the other side for its far better orientation towards the sun and also for its much better control of the transit trade since the distant past, culminating during the days of the Silk Roads. Instead, Nager was looking more to the east – across the Hispar glacier to Baltistan and Kashmir. One or two suspension-bridges between the two sides across the Hunza River – flowing mostly through deep gorges – made contacts possible, and since the early 1970s, when the KKH was opened for traffic (closed soon after for further constructions and then reopened in 1978), a modern bridge even allows the crossing by car.

On each valley half existed an autonomous state with its specific social elite topped by a *raja* or *mir* or *tham*, mostly called “prince” or “king” in English, and thus, Hunza must be understood as (once) featuring two “princely states” or “kingdoms” adhering to two different Islamic creeds. Both “kings” were dethroned in 1972 (Nager) and 1974 (Hunza), and the states were then incorporated into the Republic of Pakistan.

When Frembgen started his ethnographic fieldwork in Hunza in 1981, his main interest focused on the social and political structure in Nager. In addition, his keen interest for all kinds of the arts and crafts motivated him to undertake a meticulous documentation of the relevant techniques and to acquire representative objects of the material culture. Gradually a collection of finally numbering 479 items was acquired for the Munich Museum für Völkerkunde or Ethnographic Museum, recently renamed Museum Fünf Kontinente, in the years 1990 to 1994, after a representative collection of embroidered items had been purchased for the German Textile Museum in Krefeld.

The book deals – after a chapter providing “An Ethnographic Overview” and another on the museum’s collection – with the material culture based on the said collection. All aspects of the crafts of Hunza and Nager are discussed, with relevant specimens described and analysed as far as these objects are in the collection or are illustrated by locally taken photos. Thus, one finds the whole spectre of objects made of wood, iron, silver, wool, silk, willow twigs, stone, or pumpkins.

The different crafts and their objects are presented in the chapters titled “Luxury Items for the Elite” (14–16), “Jewellery and the Art of the Silversmith” (17–26), “Embroidery and the Aesthetics of Women” (27–36), “Historic Silk Production” (37–40), “Weaving Cloth and Rugs” (41–48), “Architecture and Carpentry” (49–66), “Woodcarving” (67–76), “Musical Instruments” (77–80), “Weapons, Tools, and the Craft of the Blacksmith” (81–84), “Basketry and Mat Weaving” (85–90), “Leatherwork” (91–94), “Accessories of Falconry” (95–96), “Stone Vessels” (97–98), and, finally, “Calabashes” (99–100). In general, the chapters start with notes on the respective craftsmen, who often live in separate professionally homogenous hamlets, and they are well illustrated by characteristic objects complete with their local names and detailed description.

The chapter titled “Luxury Items for the Elite” provides important general information on both the aristocracy and highly specialized craftsmen such as silversmiths

living close to the king’s palace. Most prominent among the items are the crowns of the Nager kings and crown princes, made mainly in Srinagar and probably also locally (Frembgen dealt with two of them in an article published 1988). One of them is seen in a photo by Frembgen (Fig. 7) which shows Raja Karim Khan, a son of the last but one ruler of Nager, generously posing in royal attire and wearing a crown, when Frembgen was collecting field data for his PhD in Heidelberg in the 1980s.

The chapter on jewellery, a topic particularly dear to Frembgen, describes representative items such as segments of necklaces, pectorals, ear rings, fibulas, pendants, etc., with amulet holders among them, complete with their names, their production, a detailed typology (21–25) and the possible derivation of their design motifs, e.g., also from Central Asia and Afghanistan. Among the particular motifs are the tree of life, birds such as those often appearing on bridal jewellery, the fish symbolising “the female principle” (25), and multi-lobed designs interpreted as alluding to the “cosmic mountain.” Sadly, “since the 1970s, due to the shortage of local silversmiths, much of the jewellery in use in Hunza and Nager ... has been produced and purchased in Gilgit” (18).

Also embroidered items were dear to Frembgen, constituting a major field of artistic and aesthetic expressions by women, and he had written about them already in a monograph in 1998 (which he refers to on p. 27). This textile craft “filtered down to the masses from women belonging to the royal families and nobility,” with the “elite aesthetic perception” remaining “distinctive in social relations,” but still “characterizing the respective lifestyles” (27). Six samples (Figs. 22–29) are illustrated, described with the mention of local terms for cross-stitch, combined stitch, etc. used for embroidering veils, caps, purses, etc. The purse shown in Fig. 27 is singled out and commented on as a “real masterpiece.” The whereabouts of this specimen and another is not stated. A long list of local terms is given in the “Glossary” (104).

Silk and silken clothes were certainly important items in Hunza as much of them must have ended up there (much less in Nager) when caravans passing through the valley and had to pay for the right to pass or were simply robbed. Only very recently, reportedly for several decades from around 1900 to the 1960s (37f.), there was some rearing of silkworms brought from Kashmir and the production of rather low quality in several (named) villages. There is no mention of locally woven silken clothes. The weaving of cloth and rugs from sheep wool, goat, and yak hair by weavers located mainly in several (named) villages, is described meticulously. The focus is laid on rugs made of goat and yak hair, with one of them, belonging to the Munich collection, featuring a truly impressive decoration with cross-shaped patterns (Fig. 37).

The two chapters on “Architecture and Carpentry” and “Woodcarving” would constitute, especially if combined, by far the most important section in the book, but the book focuses on the Munich collection and Frembgen had already published a comprehensive article on the subject in 2005, referred to on p. 66. (titled “Traditional Art and Architecture in Hunza and Nager.” The article is published

in the Aga Khan Trust for Culture publication named “Karakoram. Hidden Treasures in the Northern Areas of Pakistan”). Notwithstanding, Frembgen mentions the two dominant buildings, namely the old Hunza forts in Altit and Baltit (the latter is shown in a beautiful photo opposite of p. 1, taken before the fort’s restoration by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in 1992–1996), and he presents, together with photos and notes on their carved decoration, several Hunza mosques (Figs. 45–47, 53–54), (new) Nager *imambargahs* (Shi’a assembly halls, Figs. 48–51). He also deals briefly with shrines and flour mills.

Among the religious buildings stood out the beautifully decorated Shah Ghazanfar Mosque (Fig. 54) which was in a deplorable state when I saw and photographed it in 1973, and which was dismantled shortly after 1981 (56), thereby sharing the sad fate of many old wooden mosques in northern Pakistan. At its end, the chapter offers a “vocabulary of patterns and motifs” discerning between “floral ornaments,” “geometric patterns,” and “symbolic motifs.” Among the floral designs arabesque-like scrollwork, such as those seen in the two forts and old mosques in Hunza, contrast with flat modern carvings dominating in Nager, featuring a more natural looking and richly coloured flowers rising from vases. Among the symbolic patterns dominates often the swastika. Smaller carved wooden objects are dealt with in the chapter titled “Woodcarving,” where Frembgen presents boxes, farming tools, household utensils, saddles, water pipes, spoons, and wooden sandals.

With regard to “Musical Instruments” a *urnai* (Fig. 72) appears as part of the Munich collection, while the drums in the collection (a double-barrel drum and two kettle drums) are only referred to in the notes (80). Flutes and string instruments, among them a long-necked *sitar* and the widely known *rubab*, are presented in locally taken photographs. A good picture (Fig. 75) illustrates musicians in Nager playing a *urnai* and drums, recalling what kind of loud, piercing, and thus “exciting” noise such instruments can produce when played on the occasion of public events such as, in particular, polo games, or in the context of marriages.

Between the final chapters dealing with metal objects, in particular weapons, basketry, leatherwork, stone vessels, and calabashes, one finds the short chapter on falconry with the interesting information that members of social elite were passionate falconers, keeping the birds for hunting partridges, ducks and snow grouses, and apparently also for their “sortie” on the occasion of public events. The two last rulers of Nager kept up to twenty falcons and had up to five falconers in their service (95). “When the kingdom was abolished and the traditional festivals that were under the patronage of the ruler suddenly ceased,” the passion for falconry ceased as well (95). Accordingly, falconry performances formed part of such festivals, together with polo games, dances, and other events meant to entertain the former state’s citizens.

A little critically one might state that there is no map of Hunza, that in the bibliography two pertinent publications are missing, and that the photos taken during fieldwork are not dated. That is, of course, a very minor blem-

ish. All in all, it is a well-designed and well-printed book which offers much serious information about one of the most exciting valleys worldwide without venturing into specific ethnological discussions or personal narratives. It throws light on two most remarkable cultures once literally hidden inside the vast mountain world of the westernmost Karakoram, but located all the same on a very important thoroughfare between two Asian subcontinents.

Max Klimburg

**Frömming, Urte Undine, Steffen Köhn, Samantha Fox, and Mike Terry** (eds.): *Digital Environments. Ethnographic Perspectives across Global Online and Offline Spaces*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2017. 267 pp. ISBN 978-3-8376-3497-6. Price: € 29.99

The edited volume “Digital Environments. Ethnographic Perspectives across Global Online and Offline Spaces” is a collection of 16 essays by students and graduates of the M.A. Programme in Visual and Media Anthropology at the Free University Berlin. This is the first special feature of the book. The second is the anthropological and ethnographic perspective from which the individual texts discuss a diversity of digital technologies, platforms, services as well as related sociocultural phenomena, events, and practices. As Sarah Pink in the book’s foreword notes, these texts and the underlying projects focus “on central issue[s] for the discipline ... through the prism of visual and media anthropology” (10). Being not part of the anthropological mainstream, this visual and media anthropology perspective holds the potential of providing exciting new insights in digital culture and our increasingly digitalized societies. The digital ethnography perspective, on the other hand, focuses on “the ways in which technologies have become inseparable from other materialities and human activities” including ethnographic fieldwork, as Urte Undine Frömming, Steffen Köhn, Samantha Fox, and Mike Terry note in the introduction chapter (15).

The book consists of two parts – “Digital Communities and the Re-Creation of the Self and Social Relationships Online” and “Political Digital Environments and Activism Online”, Frömming et al. argue that the concept of “digital environments” allows for (ethnographically) describing “the mutual permeation of the virtual with the physical world” (13). They understand digital environments as a “conglomeration of technologies, events and realities that interpenetrate each other” and that “have become a ubiquitous aspect of contemporary life and cultures” (pp. 13, 15). Because of the close entanglement between digital environments and the physical world, it is misleading to conceptualize life in binary oppositions such as “the virtual” and “the real.” While they state that through the utilization of the notion of “digital environments” it is possible to avoid such dichotomies, they continue that this concept also allows for describing “when and how online and offline worlds intersect” as well as the related consequences for the physical world. This, however, looks like the continuity of dualistic conceptualizations rather than the transcending of dichotomies.