

ya). *Narmakked* also means “to write” and *sobed*, “to build, to construct, to brew, to draw.” The opposition between writing and drawing confounds any invariant association of *sopalet* with internal forms and souls, and *narmakkalet* with externalities and bodies.

Mònica Martínez Mauri

Gagnon, Gregory O.: *Culture and Customs of the Sioux Indians*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. 182 pp. ISBN 978-0-8032-4454-2. Price: £ 12.99

This volume presents a succinct introduction to the history and culture of the Sioux, embracing the three major divisions – Santee, Yankton/Yanktonai, and Teton. Their territory stretched from Minnesota to Montana and despite cultural differences among them, historically they shared common cultural fundamentals and spoke a single language (though regionally differentiated into distinct dialects). The author is careful to note that although the Santee and Yankton/Yanktonai called themselves “Dakota,” and the Teton dialectal form is “Lakota,” there is no term in the native language to embrace both, so to designate all the groups he uses the word “Sioux.” Gagnon is attuned to the importance of understanding culture through language and he, therefore, chooses to use a number of native language terms throughout, such as *Itancan* rather than “leader” or “chief,” and *Tiyospaye* rather than “community” (viii).

The book does not result from original research but rather represents a wide range of scholarly literature combined with the author’s own experiences. Trained as a historian, Gagnon, himself a Chippewa tribal member, was an administrator at Oglala Lakota College on Pine Ridge Reservation for nearly seventeen years; subsequently, until his recent retirement, he taught Indian Studies at the University of North Dakota.

Gagnon begins the book with a detailed chronology dated from 10,000 B.P. to 2009. In this we see refracted the work of archeologists and linguists whose tentative reconstructions are transformed into facts when forced into a timeline. So, for example, the assertions (xi–xii) that the ancestors of the Sioux were living in northern Minnesota by 1300 and evolved into the people we know as the Sioux by 1500 result from merging speculations based on linguistic reconstruction with the study of archeological remains. In fact, there is no way of connecting archeological sites with specific language groups nor is there any way to know what the ethnic or political identity of ancestral speakers of Siouan languages might have been.

What we do know is that the Sioux are first mentioned in the “Jesuit Relations” in 1640 and from then on there is a growing record of their history and culture, and that is the focus of the book. Gagnon writes in his introductory chapter: “‘Traditional’ is the descriptive term selected to describe the Sioux of the eighteenth through much of the nineteenth century. This is the period when Sioux culture reached its florescence” (7). The first half of the book presents a history of the Sioux up to the 1980s. The account is focused on relations between the Sioux and Europeans, and later with the United States, emphasizing

diplomatic and political issues. The second half of the book deals with wide-ranging social and cultural topics, including religion, politics, economics, music and dance, and oral traditions. A concluding chapter surveys a variety of significant contemporary social and political issues. An appendix lists religious ceremonies, social and political divisions, and population numbers. A glossary defines some basic concepts and terms and a brief annotated bibliography concludes the book.

This work was first published in hardback by Greenwood Press in 2011; this edition makes it available in paperback. The book is appropriate as an introduction to the Sioux for readers who are not already familiar with more scholarly literature and will make a useful text as assigned reading for classes in American Indian Studies.

Raymond J. DeMallie

Gerrits, Godfried Johan Marie: *The House Tambaran of Bongiora*. Ed. by Elisabetta Gneccchi Ruscone and Christian Kaufmann. Lugano: Museo delle Culture, 2012. 485 pp. ISBN 978-88-7795-215-8. Price: sfr 60.00

This lavishly illustrated volume provides rich ethnographic data on the male initiation ritual complex of the Abelam tribe of Papua New Guinea (PNG). Known for their artwork, towering men’s houses that once dominated village skylines, and for growing huge ceremonial yams, the Abelam people inhabit the Sepik plains and foothills of the Prince Alexander Mountains. From 1972–77 Fred Gerrits was a medical doctor living in Maprik, a town in the northern part of Abelam territory. He became interested in Abelam culture, and, encouraged by two key informants, recorded the wealth of ethnographic data reported in this volume. In particular, he arranged for the purchase of two initiation “display rooms” of sacred objects, today exhibited at the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart and the Museum der Kulturen in Basel. Thus this volume also provides comprehensive contextual data for those collections.

That nearly 40 years have elapsed between data collection and publication is no accident. In the early 1970s, the secret information reported herein was guarded by initiated men, most of whom felt that it should not be made accessible to the uninitiated. Comparable data collected at the same time from nearby Neligum Village was revealed to me only under the provision of secrecy. But Gerrits feels that now, due to the decline of traditional Abelam culture, this information should be freely available to both his informants’ descendants and to scholars.

Traditional Abelam religion and spiritual beliefs involve (here I employ the ethnographic present) a collection of mystical objects, plants, animals, spirit beings and, especially, ancestral spirits. Many of these supernatural beings are thought to be capable of influencing human affairs. Two of the most important are the *ngwaaIndu* (ancestor spirits thought to be especially powerful) and the *kutakwa* (evil female spirit-beings similar to the witches of Western folklore). Abelam males are introduced to these supernatural beings through a series of successive, fairly well-defined initiation ceremonies which vary from village to village. In the author’s main fieldsite, Bongiora

Village, there are four basic divisions or “stadia,” most consisting of two parts, for a total of seven stages. Earlier ceremonies take place outside of the *kurambu* or spirit house, and are designed to introduce boys to the lower spirits including the *kutakwa*. Later stages introduce them to the awe-inspiring *ngwaalndu*, represented by statues, paintings, and sounds. As the initiation stages progress, initiates are shown or given various musical instruments including bullroarers, soundboards, flutes, ocarinas, resonators, and trumpets whose sounds embody spirit voices. Also representing the spirits are costumed dancers with feathered headdresses who perform during the ceremonies. In the last two initiation divisions, special sections of the *kurambu* are arranged with scenes containing painted wooden carvings and other figures symbolizing *ngwaalndu*. At the culmination of the ceremonies, these exhibitions are revealed to the initiates. It is these “display rooms” that Gerrits arranged to have transported to museums in Europe.

The in-depth information reported in this volume details aspects of this male initiation complex and connects it with another set of traditional beliefs and behaviors involving yam growing. The Abelam people may well be the world’s most accomplished yam growers, specializing in the display and exchange of long yams, grown to gigantic size (sometimes exceeding three meters in length) in special gardens. It is a central thesis of this volume that the *wuréngwaal* (rendered by the author as *urungwall*), a sacred wooden resonator that imitates the voices of the *ngwaalndu*, connects these two ritual complexes by playing a central role in each.

The data reported herein are both rich and exacting, at times resembling raw fieldnotes, but broader anthropological context and comparative information are mostly lacking. A very brief introductory chapter is followed directly by another describing the spirit house (called *haus tambaran* in PNG’s lingua franca, Tok Pisin) of Bongiora Village. Although it would have made more sense to me to reverse chapters two and three, because the latter provides some context for the former, chapter 3 describes the initiation cycle in a more general way. Chapter 4 details two initiation stages (those for which the collected displays were prepared) as they were performed in Bongiora in 1972, chapter 5 describes yam cultivation and yam ritual, and chapter 6 describes the role of the *wuréngwaal* in linking the two ritual complexes that the book labels *tambaran* and yam cults. Useful addenda include a list of the volume’s many plates, both black and white and color, illustrated descriptions of objects related to the two displays in the initiation “rooms” mentioned previously, and a glossary/index of key terms in Tok Pisin and Ambulas, the language of the Abelam people.

Although certain aspects of the initiation and yam complexes for which the author has data are reported in meticulous detail, there are many gaps in the overall picture of Abelam ritual. For example, there seem to be regional variations in how the overall initiation sequences are performed and returned by moieties. Anthony Forge described an eight-stage initiation complex for his field-sites (Bengragum and Wingei in the east and Yanuko in

the north) with an alternating pattern in which one moiety would initiate the boys of the opposite moiety in ceremonies 1, 3, 5, and 7; with the other performing 2, 4, 6, and 8; after which the pattern would be reversed, such that it would take two full cycles to complete the initiation. I did not find this to be the case in my own field-site of Neligum Village, in which novices were introduced to the spirits in sequential initiation stages, and I do not know of any other ethnographer who has confirmed the pattern reported by Forge. I had hoped for this volume to shed light on this issue, but, disappointingly, the subject is not addressed at all, and the reader cannot discern how the giving and returning of ceremonies was practiced in Bongiora.

For the specialist, the volume contains a wealth of ethnographic particulars and insights. For the museum professional, it provides one of the most comprehensive contextual studies of a material culture collection in existence today. But for the generalist, there is little overall context, and it is not well-situated within either ethnographic or anthropological writing. Overall, it is a very worthy addition to the ethnographic literature of the Abelam people.

Richard Scaglione

Ghassem-Fachandi, Parvis: Pogrom in Gujarat. Hindu Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Violence in India. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. 335 pp. ISBN 978-0-691-15176-2. Price: £ 52.00

How can we account for collective violence? Scholars of Hindu-Muslim antagonism in India have long sought to provide nuanced answers to this question, with some of the more well-known arguments emphasising the legacies of colonial categorisation, regional electoral dynamics, manipulation by political elites, and the presence of riot networks, as well as patterns of civic engagement, shifts in the social mobility of lower-class Hindus, and the effects of neoliberal economic reform. Rather than focussing on cause and consequence, perpetrator and victim, Ghassem-Fachandi’s recent ethnography, “Pogrom in Gujarat. Hindu Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Violence in India,” has a different concern: the complicity of those in whose name the violence is conducted.

His text addresses the 2002 violence in Ahmedabad, Gujarat’s largest city, during which at least 1,000 Muslims were killed and much Muslim-owned real estate destroyed. Ghassem-Fachandi, who conducted fieldwork in the metropolis before, during, and after the spring of 2002, centres his analysis on the days when the violence was at its zenith, from 28 February to 2 March. He defines what happened in this brief period as a pogrom – an event characterised not only by careful orchestration on the part of key political organisations and actors, but also “a specific kind of collective consciousness that makes forms of complicity possible” (9). Ghassem-Fachandi’s principal contention is that violence against Muslims on the scale seen in 2002 was possible because large numbers of Hindus who were not directly involved in the burning, stoning, killing, and looting came to frame the violence as inevitable and even acceptable.