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Dominik Kohlhagen

**Hörbst, Viola:** Heilungslandschaften. Umgangsweisen mit Erkrankung und Heilung bei den Cora in Jesús María, Mexiko. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008. 384 pp. ISBN 978-3-8258-8078-1. (Ethnologische Studien, 36) Preis: € 29,90

Viola Hörbst gibt im Buch ihrer Dissertationsschrift einen umfassenden Einblick in die Handlungen und Prozesse der verschiedenen Umgangsweisen mit Gesundheit und Krankheit in einem Cora-Dorf in Mexiko, in dem traditionelle Heilmethoden mit biomedizinischen Methoden auch zusammen genutzt und miteinander kombiniert werden. Die Autorin hat sich mit dieser ethnografischen Studie zum Ziel gesetzt, zu zeigen, inwiefern verschiedene Akteursgruppen (d. h. Cora-Patienten, Cora-Heiler, Repräsentanten der sog. "traditionellen Heilmedizin" und der Biomedizin) individuelle und gruppenspezifische Sichtweisen und Praktiken haben, die durch ihre Umgangsweisen mit Krankheit und Gesundheit sich inmitten eines kulturellen Wandels bewegen und, je nach sozialem Ort der jeweiligen Akteure, diverse "Heilungslandschaften" schaffen. Der praxistheoretische Ansatz dieser Studie gelingt durch die klare Verflechtung der analytischen Kategorien von Körper und Landschaft, welche beide als "Orte der Heilung" oder "Heilungslandschaften" dargestellt sind.

Erfolgreich füllt die Autorin damit eine ethnografische Lücke in der Fachliteratur zum Thema Religion und Heilkunde bei den Cora-Indianern in Mexiko, von denen es bisher so keine Einzelstudie zum Thema Gesundheit, Heilen und Krankheit gibt. Wie ja so oft in den indianischen Kulturen Amerikas kann man beim Thema Gesundheit und Krankheit die Religion und Kosmologie nicht ausklammern. Es ist daher kein Zufall, dass beim Thema Heilen nicht nur der menschliche Körper, sondern auch die Orte an denen Cora-Heilmethoden stattfinden besonderes Interesse verdienen. Dabei handelt es sich nicht um eine Untersuchung von Landschaft, Ort und Raum als Bestandteile universell vergleichbarer Kategorien des "Natürlichen" (i. e., wie in der westlichen Dichotomie zwischen Natur und Kultur verstanden), sondern die Cora-Landschaften werden zusammen mit dem Körper als Orte interaktiven Handelns betrachtet. Das heißt auch, dass sowohl Körper als auch Orte einerseits durch Heilungsaktivitäten konstituiert werden, andererseits wirken sie konstitutiv auf die Aktivitäten ein. Hinzu kommt also, dass Körper, Orte und Heilkunde bei den Cora miteinander verbunden werden, welches anhand der praxistheoretischen Analyse der verschiedenen Dimensionen der Handlungsorte verdeutlicht wird.

Der Ansatz von Viola Hörbst, über eine vertiefte Beziehung zu einem Verstehen der Cora-Umgangsweisen mit Krankheit und Heilung zu gelangen, gelingt durch die Pflege der schon bestehenden Kontakte während ihrer ethnografischen Aufenthalte zwischen 1998 und 2001. Die

Arbeit profitiert zusätzlich sehr von der Langzeitstudie, denn, wie die Autorin einräumt, ist es mitunter nicht einfach zu den Heilmethoden Zugang zu bekommen. Aus diesem Grund sind die erfassten Daten fast ausschließlich Beschreibungen der Heilmethoden von Cora-Patienten, Heilern und anderen, als ethnografische Erfassungen derselben, wie sie von der Autorin beobachtet werden konnten. Zwar ist dies schade, aber mindert die Qualität der Studie selbst nicht.

Dieses Buch ist in fünf Teile gegliedert, welche ihrerseits wieder unterteilt sind, so dass in jedem Teil gewisse "Begegnungen" und "Orte" besonders beschrieben werden. Der erste Teil "Begegnungen" ist der Kontextualisierung der Studie gewidmet, sowohl ethnografisch als auch theoretisch. Die Vielfalt des Themas "Heilen" in Mexiko erfordert einerseits eine Kontextualisierung der ethnografischen Besonderheiten, sowie andererseits eine klare Ausführung der theoretischen Ansatzpunkte, welche die engen Verknüpfungen der Begriffe Landschaft und Körper als Orte der Heilkunde erörtert. Dies ist der Autorin durchaus im ersten Teil des Buches gelungen. Hier führt sie den Leser geschickt an die Klassiker der Praxistheorie heran und verknüpft diese mit der Literatur zur Landschaftstheorie, um schließlich die Grundthese dieser Studie der Heilkunde der Cora-Indianer zu formulieren. Der zweite Teil beschreibt die lokalen Begebenheiten und führt den Leser in die unmittelbare Umgebung von Jesús María und Vernetzung verschiedener medizinischer Systeme (Krankenhaus und Cora-Heiler) ein. Der dritte Teil dieser Arbeit befasst sich im Detail mit den Handlungskonzepten der Cora, wobei einerseits der medizinische Pluralismus beschrieben wird, andererseits Einblick in die Patientenperspektive und Arbeit der unterschiedlichen Spezialisten gewährt wird. Nach dieser ausführlichen Kontextualisierung der Studie befasst sich dann der vierte Teil endlich mit den *costumbres* zur Vorbeugung, Verursachung und Heilung von Krankheiten. Dieser Teil bildet damit das Kernstück der ethnografischen Erhebung der medizinischen Praktiken der Cora. Dabei weist die Autorin auf die Vielfalt der *costumbres* hin, welche nicht nur Heilpraktiken umfassen, sondern durchaus sämtliche Zeremonialpraktiken der Cora mit einbeziehen. Wie bei anderen mexikanischen Gruppen ist es auch bei den Cora in der Tat mitunter schwierig, andere religiöse oder rituelle Handlungen bzw. Festivitäten und Heilpraktiken voneinander zu trennen. Dies wird ausreichend behandelt. Der fünfte und letzte Teil der Arbeit ist der Analyse der Beziehungen zwischen den verschiedenen Handlungsweisen gewidmet und bringt abschließend die anfangs vorgestellten theoretischen Konzepte (Landschaft, Körper, Kommunikation, Person, Gesellschaft etc.) miteinander in Verbindung. Alles in allem ist es der Autorin gelungen, die Heilungslandschaften der Cora in Jesús María erfolgreich ethnografisch darzustellen.

Kristina Tiedje

**Howell, Nancy:** Life Histories of the Dobe !Kung. Food, Fatness, and Well-Being over the Life Span Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. 234 pp. ISBN

978-0-520-26234-8. (Origins of Human Behavior and Culture, 4) Price: \$ 16.95

There is a long and well-documented anthropological literature on the Dobe! Kung (*ju l'hoansi*), which is a treasure trove of information concerning the origins of human behavior and culture in southern Africa. Naturally, one could ask why another book on the !Kung, especially when it draws on data collected more than 40 years ago? In "Life Histories of the Dobe !Kung. Food, Fatness, and Well-Being over the Life Span," Nancy Howell suggests that the merit of this endeavor is rooted in the fact that empirical studies of hunting and gathering have come a long way since the time when she, Richard Lee, Irven DeVore, and an interdisciplinary team of researchers studied the !Kung during the late 1960s into the early 1970s.

Our understanding of the bio-cultural interactions that shape these lifeways has led to new questions and advances in theory that could be applied to old data sets. Further, improvements in methodology (e.g., computer simulations) can be used to re-analyze and reinterpret data. In the end, Howell argues that by applying life history theory to her demographic data, fresh insights into fertility, mortality, nutritional status, and health among the !Kung and other hunting and gathering societies and some horticultural and pastoral peoples can be put forward.

In her introduction, Howell begins by stating that "all life history theory rests on the principle of allocations, ... energy used for one purpose cannot be used for another ... [and that] [e]nergy allocations between the essential life processes of (1) maintenance, (2) growth, and (3) reproduction are viewed as a series of trade-offs made over an individual's life course" (7). This forms the theoretical skeleton that the rest of the book hangs upon. Howell presents a cogent reinterpretation of data that she collected in Botswana beginning in 1969 on !Kung life history stages, body-size and growth, caloric requirements, caloric productivity balance, kinship, and food sharing.

Prior to getting down to the details, Howell provides a justification for using life history theory and offers researchers the opportunity to use that data that she and some of her colleagues collected, which are now archived at the University of Toronto. In addition, she addresses the question that her students have as to the authenticity of the !Kung as hunters and gatherers in the face of poverty and malnutrition and social change during the last century. These are critical issues which muddy the waters of the explanatory model she is using to reinterpret her data, which she ultimately hopes will advance our understanding of the origins of human behavior and culture.

Although Howell does touch on some of the problems that have confronted the !Kung during and since her fieldwork (e.g., food insecurity, water insecurity, and the social reconfigurations associated with global economic transformation), this is a discussion that is worthy of more space in the book, and one that could have been further examined in a concluding chapter. For example, while the full impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic was not felt in southern Africa until the 1990s, it is only mentioned in passing on page 17. This is curious in light of the fact the HIV/AIDS and other health problems (e.g., tuberculosis,

malaria, and chronic diseases) are reshaping the demography, health, and cultural patterns of the region today.

Using life history theory, Howell examines each of the life stages of the !Kung in chap. 1. She discusses specific behaviors and cultural practices associated with menstruation, pregnancy, and postnatal life stages from childhood through the phases on senescence associated with frailty and increasing dependence. For example, she examines her data on infant and child feeding, mother-infant emotional and physical contact, and the shared community responsibility for child rearing, casting a new light on the life cycle in terms of trade-offs which are ultimately tied to energy allocation. Howell concludes this discussion with an examination of the demographic features of the !Kung using a series of illustrative figures. In chap. 2, life history theory is applied to the growth and development of the !Kung, which is characterized by small body size. Howell asks why this is the case and discusses various hypotheses such as reproductive benefits, sexual selection, and temperature regulation associated with having a smaller body. Using anthropometric data, she compares !Kung nutritional status with international standards of height and weight, and examines body size during each of the life stages presented in chap. 1. Although this discussion is very informative, the chapter would have benefited by an examination of other theories and hypotheses such as fetal origins which has gain a lot of currency in recent years. While not reaching any definitive conclusions, Howell suggests energy costs involved with food acquisition might hold the answer to this question, and proceeds to examine the calorie needs by age and sex that are required to support the !Kung in chap. 4. Data on basal metabolism, time budgets, physical activity levels, and temperature adjustment are presented, and Howell attempts to answer the question raised by a number of researchers concerning whether the !Kung are a hardworking people. In chapters 5 and 6, Howell looks at caloric production by age and sex and caloric balance in residential units (i.e., bands, camps, villages), respectively. She then ties up these data to address issues of food sharing and population control using life history theory.

The last two chapters address the role that kinship plays in the context of child care and the motivations behind food sharing among the !Kung. Larger theoretical issues including kin selection, reciprocal altruism, tolerated scrounging or tolerated theft, and the phenomenon of costly signaling (e.g., hunting risky game by men provides a social or mating advantage rather than a benefit in terms of consumption) are discussed here.

In applying life history theory to her data, Howell provides some new insights into the life of the !Kung. In doing so, she provokes us to reimagine how anthropological data from the past could be reinterpreted using new and more nuanced theoretical models. That being said, this book would have benefited greatly by having a concluding chapter that brought together all the main findings and offered recommendations for future research. Additionally, although this book contributes to our knowledge about human life history, its impact would have been even more significant if Howell had discussed how this theory,

along with the reinterpretation of her data, could be used to address contemporary problems and issues that confront modern-day hunters and gatherers, horticulturalists, and pastoral peoples. In my humble opinion, this was a missed opportunity. Nevertheless, “Life Histories of the Dobe !Kung. Food, Fatness, and Well-Being Over the Life Span” has its place in the literature and will be appreciated by professional and advanced students alike.

David Himmelgreen

**Hsu, Elisabeth, and Stephen Harris** (eds.): *Plants, Health, and Healing. On the Interface of Ethnobotany and Medical Anthropology*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2010. 316 pp. ISBN 978-1-84545-060-1. (Epistemologies of Healing, 6) Price. £ 56.00

This volume, number six of ten volumes, in the series “Epistemologies of Healing” addresses the apparent knowledge gap between medicinal ethnobotany and medical anthropology. Other volumes describe traditional ethnomedicines and healing etiologies of various geographical locations while the theme of this book emphasizes how “knowledge about plants is generated in dynamic social fields and is often highly situational, as it constitutes an intrinsic aspect of social relationships and their negotiation” (2).

This book, intended for lay audiences, provides a well-illustrated portrait of several popular medicinal plant species and their societal interaction. The introduction provides a significant theoretical contribution towards the intersection of the fields of study surrounding medicinal plant utilization. This debate assumes that ethnomedical research relies upon an empirical approach that accentuates universal or cross-cultural continuities, while anthropological methods adhere to a culturally constructed epistemology of medical knowledge without addressing the materiality of plant drugs. The chapter concludes that investigations of “common sense,” in terms of phytotherapies, will lead to common ground.

A compilation of case studies is divided into three parts with two chapters each. Sections include the history, anthropology, and portraits of plants used in medical practice. The diverse backgrounds of the authors (i.e., anthropology, botany, pharmacy, and medicine) create a multifaceted approach to examine human relationships with plant medicines. Illustrations in the volume include botanical illustrations, photos (sometimes difficult to decipher), and several tables listing plant medicines.

Both historical case studies emphasize the importance of correct botanical identification paired with traditional knowledge in order to realize how basic plant biology contributes to the efficacy of plant remedies. Herbarium curator, Stephen Harris, uses a botanical perspective to address the complex relationships cultivated by the utilization of nonnative plant species. A detailed example of the discovery and international production of *Cinchona*, which produces the antimalarial quinine, is scrutinized. Elizabeth Hsu, with consultation from Chinese pharmacist Frédéric Obringer, produces a comprehensive and chronological overview of the mentions of *Herba Ar-*

*temisiae annuae* for nearly 2,000 years. She describes the evolution of this plant’s uses from an antiseptic and appetite enhancing food additive to the treatment of sporadic fevers. Hsu argues that the transformation of prescribed treatments is related to the method of drug preparation, where the elaboration of preparations over time has allowed for the treatment of more ailments. This progression highlights that drug application is a culturally specific phenomena, which Hsu contends should be considered a cultural artifact. Repeated use of the word artifact conjures images of ancient and ineffective relics when in fact, *Artemisia annua* is used to treat malaria globally. An intercultural study of the use of the same plant coupled with the existing temporal cross-cultural connections may result in the extension of the horizons of cultural historical relationships between different geographical areas. This historical analysis does, however, chronicle how eminent Chinese physicians throughout several centuries recommend soaking the herb and then consuming the fresh juices. This substantial variation from the tincture form typically prescribed should encourage future extraction studies.

The anthropological section offers two superior studies demonstrating incidences where plant materials are fundamental to the establishment, stability, and maintenance of social relationships. Françoise Barbira Freedman, a social anthropologist, tackles the subject of gender in relation to plant classification and utilization by shamans in the upper Amazon. This analysis provides an explanation, besides patriarchy, of the known male bias present amongst the majority of traditional healers worldwide. A possible rationalization provided for the Lamista Quechua shaman gender bias relates male seduction and use of gendered paired and oppositional plant materials to social control over the cosmic fertility of the land, which translates to agency in healing. Wenzel Geissler and Ruth Prince’s ethnography of a Luo family in western Kenya explores the role of herbal medicines used to address childhood illness. Healing practices emerge during interactions of relatedness. The sharing of knowledge, touch, habitat, physical substances, and experiences promote healing and consolidate family ties.

The section on plant portraits provides insight into how historical, biological, and sociocultural factors have shaped human-plant associations. Gerontologist Sir John Grimley Evans expertly illustrates how the deterministic approach utilized by Western biomedicine may have precluded the use of pluripotential medicines. Using *Ginkgo biloba* as an example, Grimley Evans proposes a probabilistic approach towards judging the efficacy of plant medicines using a systematic review of treatment outcomes for individual patients. Plant profiles and terrific botanical illustrations of the indispensable caffeine-containing plants, *Camellia sinensis* (tea), *Coffea arabica* (coffee), *Cola nitida* (cola), *Theobroma cacao* (cacao), *Ilex paraguariensis* (maté), and *Paullinia cupana* (guaraná), are presented. Weckerle, Timbul, and Blumenshine suggest that use of these psychotropic plants adhere to a biocultural context whereby the social, cultural, and economic functions of these plants emphasize the diversity amid ethnobotani-