

to navigate between the Scylla of exotic sensationalism and the Charybdis of ideologically inflected theorizing by consciously reflecting on the attractions and discontents of both. Fluently and wittily written, this is an important contribution to the anthropology of Christianity and a reflection on the potentials of current religious studies.

One more thing needs to be said in favour of the book. It is thick. While volumes beyond the 500-page-limit usually are a reviewer's nemesis, many of the anorexic ethnographies of late hardly provide the wealth of detail, the complexity of background, and the theoretical elaboration found in a work like this.

Guido Sprenger

**Chatty, Dawn:** *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 335 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-52104-8. (The Contemporary Middle East, 5) Price: £ 17.99

Communal, religious, and ethnic heterogeneities are significant features of everyday life in contemporary Levantine societies. These facets of social diversity are often raised in scholarly accounts of Middle Eastern politics and societies, in which the persistence of supranational, national, and subnational identity formations pervading social textures is distinctly emphasized. Emanating from a particular interpretation of processes of Western nation-state formation, most academic enquiries base their reasoning on the assumption that heterogeneous social, ethnic, or religious structures confined to the boundaries of a nation-state are prone to domestic political instability. A subliminal reference to the concept of homogeneity of national communities leads this thinking to deny an out-lasting cohesiveness to national societies composed of culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse communities. Premises of Western European immigration policies oscillating between appeals for cultural integration, assimilation, and social exclusion in the name of homogenized national orders appear to be built on similar reasoning.

Dawn Chatty, reader in anthropology and forced migration, and the incoming director of the University of Oxford's Refugee Studies Center, studies this kaleidoscopic diversity of Levantine societies by starting out with an examination of the regional processes of dispossession, dispersal, and forced migration in the 19th and 20th centuries. By combining a regional social history of dispersion, forced migration, and resettlement with an anthropological account of life experiences of individual members of dispersed communities, Chatty allows the reader to inspect "how various peoples, forced to migrate into or within the Middle East, have survived, founded new communities, integrated, and generally exhibited remarkable coping strategies and resilience" (2). Chatty portrays not only the historical contexts of displacement and dispersal, but also their anthropological contexts, i.e., "the individual and social group life experiences of home and imagined homeland, of single and mixed identities, of spaces and places" (10). These collected narratives of uprooted Palestinians, Kurds, Armenians, and Circassians are contextualized into larger historical dy-

namics of politics of empire, territorial disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, colonial encounters, and processes of nation-state formation. The objective of the study is both to illuminate processes of integration, assimilation, and exclusion and to answer the question why dispersed Armenians, Circassians, and Chechnyans have assimilated and integrated into Middle Eastern "host" societies and politics, while Kurdish and Palestinians communities have been left homeless within impermanent diasporic landscapes. The Middle East as portrayed by Chatty is a "unique" region with respect to its "multiculturalism" or rather "local cosmopolitanism" which, in contrast to other parts of the world, provides a framework where "different peoples can successfully find a place for themselves without either being assimilated or excluded" (2). Here, the dispersed and forcibly uprooted communities are able to strengthen their social cohesion and to restore cultural identity, without a direct linkage to a "territory which largely had been the cause of their earlier undoing" (10).

The study is divided into two parts, theoretical and empirical. The first chapter provides an overview of theoretical debates on migration, nationalism, ethnicity, and identity formation. It examines how those theories tackle processes and issues of involuntary migration and displacement and introduces essential notions of identity, hybridity, belonging, space, and place. The second chapter presents the broader historical context by situating the displacement of millions of dispossessed peoples into the dynamics of the greater power struggles between imperial Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire. The majority of the large-scale involuntary migrations were directly or indirectly related with military campaigns as a result of forms of intercommunal warfare. Newly emerging states in the Balkans were determined to shape homogenized national territories in an era of mass ethnic nationalism. Kurdish, Armenian, and Muslim communities from the Balkans and the Caucasus streamed into or migrated within territories of the Ottoman Empire. With the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their native land in 1948, the society composed of a multiplicity of ethnic and religious groups in former Ottoman territories came to an end, to be replaced by nations imagined to be homogeneous. Chatty highlights the Ottoman policies on the resettlement of the inflowing communities formed by the displaced and illustrates the struggle in these communities to maintain their social and cultural cohesion towards a (re)construction of the real, virtual, and imagined coherent communities while being deterritorialized in identity.

In the second part of the study, each of the four chapters provides a comprehensive historical examination of displacement, migration, and resettlement experienced by one specific community in the former Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire, namely Syria and Jordan, depicting contemporary political, social, and economic circumstances. Through narratives supplied by key informants from the Palestinian, Kurdish, Circassian, and Armenian communities, Chatty presents varied coping strategies and mechanisms of individual community members and

the way they are, and imagine themselves to be, shaped by hardship and dislocation of respective communities in the past. She convincingly demonstrates how processes of acculturation, hybridization, and assimilation lead to re-considerations in conceptualizing the cultural “self” and the transformation of identification among members of the diasporic communities, while continuously propounding purity and intactness of their “homogeneous” entities. Minority communities are forced to adapt and conform to prevalent local political and political contexts; e.g., the majority of Circassians assimilated into a Turkish national identity and are indistinguishable from Turks in Turkey, whereas Circassian communities in Jordan reject assimilation outright, but are well integrated in society and represented in politics as a minority community (120–131). This demonstrates how identities are to some extent constrained and formed by surrounding context, but also self-defined, fragmentary, multiple and fluid. This multiplicity of identities allows for an accommodation of the past and the present, the experiencing of home and imagined homeland as mutually inclusive.

Chatty’s study places a strong emphasis on the historical regional context of displacement and on the positioning of the communities in the social and political textures of selected Middle Eastern states. In addition to this rather geographically narrow focus and the strong accentuation on historical macro-processes, the study falls short of including sufficiently detailed depictions of social practices in which processes of assimilation, integration, cohesion, or matters of belonging should be represented. The reference to secondary sources clearly dominates over ethnographic data, with history outbalancing anthropology. However, given the remarkable lack of comparative studies of displacement and forced migration in the Middle East, Chatty’s book is an invaluable contribution. By granting a detailed overview over experiences of dispersal, assimilation, and integration of four minority communities against the backdrop of the broad sweep of Mediterranean history, the book’s greatest merit might not be its advancements of theoretical insights of involuntary migration processes and displacement, but the way it challenges narratives of state formation and how it examines continuous pressures on minority communities to change, adapt, and conform to practices and features of majority communities in heterogeneous Levantine societies in the past and today. Moreover, it humanizes the harsh experiences of forced migration, resettlement, and integration, processes that shape the social features of the Middle East to this day.

Erik Mohns

**Christoph, Henning:** Voodoo – Die Kraft des Heilens. (Dokumentarfilm.) München: Alamode Filmdistribution, 2009. 70 min. / OmU. Preis: € 20.99

Die Aussage des Ethnologen, Fotojournalisten und Filmemachers Henning Christoph “Wir brauchen immer eine Erklärung für alles. Dazu muss ich sagen, dass ich damit vor langem aufgehört habe ... Ich akzeptiere und ich bin privilegiert, dass ich dokumentieren darf” ist paradigmatisch für seinen 2007 in Benin gedrehten Film: Er

dokumentiert ohne Kommentar, und ist nur mit den einzelnen Kapiteln vorgeschalteten, in das folgende Ritual einführenden Texttafeln versehen.

Der Film ist eine Reise in zwölf Kapiteln durch das Benin des Voodoo. Er beginnt mit einem Schuss: Anlässlich eines Festes zu Ehren des Kriegsgottes Gligbangbé wird mit einem Schrotgewehr auf einen Mann geschossen, der aufgrund mehrtägiger Vorbereitung unverletzt bleibt. Die Szene ist eine Reminiszenz an Henning Christophs erste Begegnung mit dem Voodoo bei dem Voodoo-Priester Sossa Guédéhoungué Ende der 1970er Jahre, einem Onkel seines langjährigen Forschungsassistenten Paul Akakpo.

Im Folgenden lernen die Zuschauer die Protagonistin, Rosaline Hounkponou, kennen, eine junge Marktfrau, die unter Alpträumen und Magenschmerzen leidet. Das Filmteam begleitet sie über viele Wochen zu diversen Zeremonien bei unterschiedlichen Priestern. Zunächst sucht Rosaline einen Priester auf, der für sie das Fa-Orakel befragt, ein mit 256 Kombinationsmöglichkeiten und den dazugehörigen Sinnsprüchen äußerst komplexes Orakel. Das Orakel ergibt, dass Rosaline Opfer von Hexerei wurde und es einiger Rituale bedarf, um von dieser Hexerei loszukommen. Am Ende des Films wird Rosaline in den Kult der Mami Wata initiiert. Dies ist die letzte Zeremonie. Danach ist sie von ihren Schmerzen und Alpträumen geheilt und vor weiteren Angriffen der Hexen geschützt.

Diese kurze Zusammenfassung wird der Vielfalt des Films jedoch nicht gerecht. Zwar taucht Rosaline im Laufe des Films immer wieder auf, dennoch folgt der Film nicht strikt ihrem Heilungsweg, sondern zeigt zahlreiche Facetten des Voodoo, in denen sich die Grundprinzipien des Voodoo herauskristallisieren.

Zu den Bestandteilen des Voodoo zählen Opfer und Trance. Zu einem Ritual gehört meist das Schlachten eines Huhnes oder einer Ziege. Was für westliche Augen grausam und gefühllos erscheinen mag, meint das Gegenteil: Indem dem Huhn das Leben genommen wird, wird dem Bittsteller Lebenskraft geschenkt. Um besondere Kraft geht es auch bei der Trance. In ihr werden die menschlichen Fähigkeiten der Gläubigen erweitert, sie werden zu dem Gott, den sie verkörpern, und dadurch zu Mittlern zwischen den Welten. Auch hier zeigt der Film, wie das auf den ersten Blick bedrohlich und chaotisch Wirkende erlernt wurde und fürsorglich begleitet wird. Die Rituale beginnen häufig mit einem dem jeweiligen Gott gewidmeten Tanz, bei dem die Eigenheiten, wie etwa das lahme Bein des Gottes Sakpata, getanzt werden. Die Bewegung bewirkt zusammen mit einem bestimmten Trommelrhythmus Hyperventilation, die zur Trance führt. Die autoaggressive Trance im Goro-Voodoo zeigt die Überlegenheit der Kriegergötter gegenüber den Hexen, die sie bekämpfen. Die Voodooosi, die sich in Trance mit Messern verletzen und auf Hausdächer klettern, werden Tage vorher darauf vorbereitet und während der Trance von älteren, erfahrenen Voodooosi begleitet, die den Zeitpunkt kennen, an dem die Trance beendet werden sollte – eine behutsame Prozedur, die mehrere Stunden dauern kann. Wunderbar fängt der Film das Erstaunen in den Gesichtern der aus der Trance Erwachten ein.