

highlights human ideals and experiences, and aptly incorporates recent theoretical work on mimesis, embodiment, and concepts of personhood. She thus offers an in-depth study of spirit possession in a specific localized context that is enriched by a complex and varied theoretical analysis.

Larsen's main focus in this book is how difference and sameness between humans and spirits, men and women, and the various *makabila* ("tribes" or ethnic identity) in the multicultural and sex-segregated society of Zanzibar town is expressed through the medium of spirit possession. Larsen shows how, during spirit possession, people's bodies become "the other" in terms of ethnic/tribal identity, gender, and accepted norms of society. She sees spirit possession as illuminating the social reality that gender, ethnicity, and behavioral norms are cultural constructions that are "malleable and negotiated," contrary to social ideals and common perceptions. Larsen points out that differences in gender and ethnicity in the spirit world are expressed largely in terms of aesthetics, attributes, and types of social relations rather than differences in essence; and that spirits transgress Zanzibar ideals of modesty and concealment by expressing emotions and transgressions of social ideals that are normally concealed. Thus spirits express the "contradictions, ambiguities, and paradoxes [of] life" (157). Although Larsen repeats many of these main theoretical points throughout the book, these repetitions make her points more memorable and understandable (especially for students not familiar with this type of interpretation) and also explore different aspects of her central themes.

One important asset of Larsen's study is that it presents the diversity of Zanzibari opinions about spirits and reactions to them, often through individual examples. She also makes a major contribution by exploring what various individuals experience during spirit possession and how they interpret and perceive it. Larsen also gives us a detailed exploration of Zanzibari norms of behavior, especially those connected with gender; gives us examples of how individuals deal with, manipulate, and transgress these norms in real life, and shows how spirit possession relates to these social processes. She focuses most on the *kibuki* (Malagasy spirits) because they relate the most to gender expressions, by being ritually focused with women and male homosexuals, coming in gendered pairs to the same person, exaggerating gender stereotypes, and openly expressing sexual emotions and behaviors that are normally concealed.

In conclusion, Larsen's description and analysis is complex and multilayered. Nonetheless, the book is very readable and suitable for undergraduates as well as specialists. It will appeal to those interested in spirit possession and Zanzibari and Swahili society as well as those more generally interested in gender, ritual, and performance studies, conceptions of the self and personhood, and the formation and expression of personal and social identity – the book in fact is part of a series on social identity in various cultures.

Linda L. Giles

**Lecomte-Tilouine, Marie:** *Hindu Kingship, Ethnic Revival, and Maoist Rebellion in Nepal*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009. 294 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-569792-6. Price: £ 24.99

Undoubtedly, anthropologists should incorporate more historical analysis into their fieldwork-based studies (and, perhaps, historians need more anthropological perspectives in their work), for this collection of essays by Marie Lecomte-Tilouine demonstrates how productive the results of such an inclusion can be. The main threads of this volume – tribal identity, Maoist rebellion, Hindu kingship, and caste organization – may initially seem a set of topics too diverse to fit together smoothly in a slim volume of essays, but by combining precise ethnographic observations and careful scrutiny of historical sources, the interconnections and evolution of these four topics are strikingly revealed.

Material incorporated into Lecomte-Tilouine's studies includes not just the long field conversations, oral traditions, and interviews that traditionally anchor all good anthropology, but also discursive sources ranging from a nineteenth-century novel through present-day Maoist poetry, plays, internet chat sites, polemical and academic publications, myths, military reports, royal chronicles, and on-going debates of Nepalese historiography. The results suggest that ethnographic researchers need to read equally widely in the diverse secondary literature, if they wish to achieve more subtle and complete ideas of what is going on at their field sites.

The volume consists of an introduction, eight chapters (all previously published separately between 1996 and 2006), and a short postscript. The introduction itself is a significant ethnological contribution, pleading persuasively for a more traditional, less reflexive engagement with any subject matter by the anthropological observer. More importantly, Lecomte-Tilouine argues that alterocentrism emerges as a corollary of the social complexity and holistic nature of caste society due to its internally structured alterity, while straightforward alterization emerges from dualist conceptions of society and political opposition, such as those advanced in Maoist social thought, an argument further sustained throughout the book.

Both the first and last chapters examine literary works. Chapter 1, "Spirits, Shamans, and Englishmen," analyzes a curious nineteenth-century novel, Girishavalabha Joshi's "Vir Caritra," an adventure story that portrays the world of supernatural beings (a fictional device rare in Himalayan texts) while chapter 8, "Kill One, He Becomes a Hundred. Martyrdom as Generative Sacrifice in the Nepal People's War," is an examination of contemporary Maoist poetry. In each of these chapters, the texts are seen as metaphorical accounts of the world as Nepalese see it, with the themes of alterity and alterocentrism explored in these two distinct symbolic universes. Analyzing fictional encounters with otherness a century apart shows how alterocentrism in Nepal is evolving into alterization, a process nourished by tribal revivalism and the creation of group identities based on "indigenous" status, producing an increasingly negative evaluation of

fundamental Hindu principles. Since people who now consider themselves “indigenous” form a third of Nepal’s total population, this is an issue set to plague Nepal’s constitutional assembly as it seeks federal solutions to statehood based on ethnicities and languages; insights that this volume offers on these issues are a significant reason why these essays should be read by those preparing for Nepal’s future.

Chapters 2 through 5 explore the changing strategies adopted by Nepal’s largest ethnic community, the Magars, in the course of their relations with their high caste neighbors, strategies that range from sanskritization and ritual integration to contestation, desanskritization, and revolution. These approaches to quasisuccessful but ever-changing relations are of course not unilateral, and should be understood within the scope of action allowed by this group through Hindu ideology, along with the instrumentalization of that ideology within the state organization, an issue additionally addressed in chapter 6. Magars, numbering around one and a half million, had in the past developed the closest relations with Hinduism and caste organization and are now the group most radically contesting those relations by insisting that, as opposed to Brahmans and Chetris, they are a truly “indigenous” group, the first inhabitants of the region and, therefore, its only legitimate masters. Chapter 2 explores the question of why the earth goddess is central to Magar worship while she is neglected by upper caste Hindus, while chapter 3 looks at Magar participation in the state rituals of the Nepal. Magar attempts to compose their own ethnohistory form the subject of chapter 4, and a particular case of this, that of Lakhan Thapa, a soldier in Nepal’s army hanged for rebellion in 1876 whose name until recently was used to describe a ridiculous fool but who is now accorded status as “first martyr” of Nepal, is examined in chapter 5, using this messianic character to analyze utopia and ideology among the Magars.

“The Transgressive Nature of Hindu Kingship in Nepal,” chapter 6, shifts the focus away from tribalism to the paradoxes inherent in monarchy, contrasting the recent Shah kingdom with the Malla kingdoms that preceded it and focusing on the transgressions (sacrilege, ritual pollution, and incest) linked to Shah kingship. Chapter 7, the shortest and least convincing in the volume (Lecomte-Tilouine seems to accept the official report of the 2001 palace massacre at face value, an account that members of the investigative committee themselves find farcical), connects the emergence of the People’s War with the weakening of royal power in Nepal, a plausible conjecture. Finally, the three-page postscript seeks to update events through 2008, but unfortunately is already dated, as events in Nepal continue to unfold at a brisk pace. In its place, I would have preferred to see a larger selection of the author’s relevant articles, since there are a dozen other essays that Lecomte-Tilouine has published from which several might have been usefully incorporated.

Chapters are set apart by well selected, clearly printed photos. More rewriting of each essay for continuity would have been in order, and the occasionally infelic-

itous English word selection might have been improved, but in general the flow of the prose is better than adequate, and typographical errors are kept to a minimum.

Displaying a subtle balance between sweeping issues of both contemporary and historic South Asian society – caste, ritual, royalty, statehood, and revolutionary violence – and the finer nuances of ethnographic and textual details, these essays collectively achieve a rare narrative dynamics that will reward careful study. Clearly, this selection of essays on Nepalese identity, ethnicity, kingship, and rebellion will enthrall not only all scholars of South Asian studies (with whom it will especially resonate), but much more generally will inform anyone interested in the interactions of culture, politics, history, and religion.

Gregory G. Maskarinec

**Lièvre, Viviane:** Die Tänze des Maghreb. Marokko – Algerien – Tunesien. Frankfurt: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2008. 206 pp., Fotos. ISBN 978-3-87476-563-3. Preis: € 16,00

“Die Tänze des Maghreb. Marokko – Algerien – Tunesien” ist eine Übersetzung des 1987 auf Französisch erschienenen Buchs “Danses du Maghreb d’une rive à l’autre” der französischen Ethnologin Viviane Lièvre. Ihr Interesse an den traditionellen Tänzen Nordafrikas begründet sie damit, dass “die Tänze in ihrer Form und Funktion sich aus den Beziehungen zwischen Männern und Frauen herleiten, aus religiösen und historischen Einflüssen, der Einstellung zur Sexualität und das[s] umgekehrt die Analyse der verschieden[en] Tänze auf eigene Weise diese Faktoren der sozialen Struktur Nordafrikas erhellt” (14). Ihr Anliegen ist es, mit Hilfe einer Analyse und Beschreibung der nordafrikanischen Tänze den kulturellen Reichtum und die Traditionen dieser Region und damit letztendlich auch die Lebenszusammenhänge darzustellen. Auf 26 Seiten gibt sie zunächst einen (geschichtlichen) Überblick von der vorislamischen Zeit über die Einstellung des Islam zu Tanz und Musik, einschließlich der Ekstasetänze der religiösen Bruderschaften. Sie beschreibt auch Tänze und Musik im urbanen Bereich, die meist von professionellen Sänger- und Tänzerinnen dargeboten werden, Tänze und Gesänge auf dem Land, wie sie bei Familien- und jahreszeitlichen Festen aufgeführt werden und schließlich den heutigen (1980er Jahre) Umgang mit traditioneller Musik und Tanz in den nordafrikanischen Ländern, dessen kulturelle Bewahrung teils von staatlichen Instituten gefördert wird.

Den größten Teil des Buches (140 Seiten) widmet sie der Beschreibung einzelner Tänze in Marokko, Algerien und Tunesien. Lièvre gibt Auskunft darüber, an welchen Orten oder in welchen Regionen die Tänze durchgeführt werden, erwähnt auch die Ursprungsmythen, auf die ein Tanz sich bezieht; sie gibt an bei welcher Gelegenheit oder bei welchem Fest er getanzt wird, ob von Männern oder Frauen oder gemeinsam, welche Kleidung und welcher Schmuck getragen werden, welche Musikinstrumente dabei zum Einsatz kommen und schließlich macht sie auch Angaben über die Tanzschritte. Ergänzt werden