

of Sciences, “offers a much-needed link between careful ethnography of local Roma communities and a study of the European Roma political movement in its transnational context.” These hyperbolic claims are, sadly, not confirmed by my reading of this work. Only some of the chapters are rooted in ethnography, and much of the material presented under that label is rather superficial. The content is disjointed with little effort at crafting coherent arguments sustained by individual chapters, most of which appear to consist of material collected in the early 2000s. But the most misleading part of this book is the title itself. Instead of addressing “Roma in Europe,” it is largely confined to “Roma in Romania.”

Chapter 1 aspires to provide an introduction to “The Roma People”, but it contains no maps, no reference to geographical distribution and cultural distinctions, and far too many unsupported generalizations. Categorical claims such as “[p]roperty is a term void of meaning for the Roma” (23) raise eye-brows in a work dedicated to the dispelling of homogenizing stereotypes. The next chapter takes the reader to a multi-ethnic community in Transylvania where Bunescu seems to have conducted summer research as part of a team from the University of Bucharest back in 1998. The discovery that local Roma have appropriated their Saxon neighbors’ concept of *Nachbarschaft* is interesting as evidence of their ability to adapt imported traditions to their own needs, but in the following chapter the ethnographic focus gives way to an analysis of EU legislation concerned with the accession of Central-East European countries, and one wonders what link there is between the legal protection of minorities and the ability of Transylvanian Roma to adjust to changing circumstances. Bunescu combines ethnography with political analysis in chap. 4 which utilizes data collected in 2004 during interviews with Romani politicians active within and outside Romanian public administration. Unfortunately, there is no indication of how many respondents were involved in this exercise or where it took place. Bunescu makes the interesting claim that since the size of pre- and post-accession EU funding earmarked for the “Roma problem” reflected the Western perception of Romanian Roma as being particularly needy of attention and intervention, the maintenance of agencies supporting the goals of EU’s integration strategy has become conditional on the perpetuation of the precarious conditions faced by Roma. Furthermore, she claims that “fieldwork carried out with Romanian public administration officials in 2004” reinforces the suspicion that all political actors involved in the Decade of Roma Inclusion “gain some benefits” from the continued perception of Roma as needy subjects (56). According to Bunescu, the biggest beneficiaries have been members of the government-sanctioned Partida Romilor and affiliated NGOs, while ordinary Roma on the ground have seen little progress.

More interpretations of the formal political sphere are presented in chap. 5 which is the only part of the book that reaches beyond Romania. Here Bunescu gives an overview of international organizations that have contributed to the political “crystallization” of Roma and their identity as a transnational minority, such as the Interna-

tional Romani Union, the European Roma and Travelers Forum, the Open Society Institute, the OSCE’s Contact Point for Roma and Sinti, and several more entities. While this section contains some interesting material and insights, it is based almost exclusively on well-known and easily accessible sources – including a plethora of websites – and at more than thirty-five pages it gives a rambling and unfocused impression.

In the last two chapters Bunescu returns to ethnography, albeit of a very superficial kind. The topic is – broadly stated – the prominence of Vlach, and within this category Kalderash, Roma in Romania. This prominence derives primarily from their image as traditionalists who have maintained distance from Romanian society at large, but also from their seemingly exceptional ability to thrive economically. Part of the Kalderash allure is due to the presence of so-called “kings” who, as Bunescu points out, continue an old tradition of traditional leaders co-opted or outright created by the majority society in an attempt at maintaining control over the Roma. There are several competing kings and even an emperor on the Romanian scene, but although they may uphold different religious traditions – nowadays mostly Pentecostal or Orthodox – they identify with and maintain dominant ideologies of Romanian society. Bunescu met two of these kings in 2003 and 2004, and she has some insightful things to say about those encounters. However, on both occasions Bunescu had very little time with the two monarchs, and her observations do not convey any penetrating insights. The same applies to the last chapter where Bunescu describes her visit, in 2004, to the Roma festival in Costesti. This is an annual affair that brings together thousands of Romanian Vlachs who participate in various activities ranging from feasting and match-making to the settling of disputes. The latter takes place through the medium of the *kris* – a traditional Vlach tribunal that can be found in all countries inhabited by this group of Roma. What emerges from Bunescu’s description of the festival is a picture of a highly stratified society maintained by a crassly unequal distribution of wealth and power. Unfortunately, the author tells next to nothing about the sources of this inequality and its correlation with political authority.

Although Bunescu touches on many interesting aspects of contemporary Romani society, her treatment of these lacks depth and a clear focus. The reader’s expectation that the concluding chapter might pull together the many strands woven in the preceding sections can hardly be fulfilled in a summary spanning a mere three pages. The book would benefit from more careful editing to eliminate unnecessary repetition and to strengthen the coherence of individual chapters that seem disconnected and at times unrelated.

David Z. Scheffel

Camus, Guigone: *Tabiteuea Kiribati*. Genève: Fondation Culturelle Musée Barbier-Mueller. Paris: Hazan, 2014. 183 pp. ISBN 978-2-75410-787-7. Price: € 20.00

There are abundant photographs of tropical coral landscapes throughout this volume. Readers of the ethno-mythological book “*Tabiteuea Kiribati*” will be impressed

and fascinated by the vivid beauty of the unknown atoll's emerald green sea, white sand beaches, and coconuts trees. They can also gain an insight into the lives of the inhabitants and their ancient myths and traditions concerning the meetinghouses or *maneaba*. The author inherits the mythological legacy from two predecessor ethnologists, Katharine Luomala and Jean-Paul Latouche, who recorded valuable oral traditions on southern Kiribati in the 20th century. This volume is underpinned by the ethnological foundation of Arthur F. Grimble, Henry Evans Maude, and John Hockings, who investigated the traditional *maneaba* and the historical documents of the early era of contact with the West.

The book is divided into four chapters: (I) Tabiteuea: an island, a history; (II) Tabiteuea, a mythological genic centre; (III) The *maneaba*, an architecture of the social; (IV) "The News from Tanaeang" by Ntongantonga (1948), the epic of the founding of Tanaeang. These chapters highlight the myths that have been orally transmitted by Tabiteueans and collected by the author's predecessors, and the ethnographic accounts about the *maneaba* recorded by the author.

Although numerous variants of the myths exist, the islands share the mythological framework of cosmogony as described in chap. II. In this mythology, a great ancestor, Nareau, opened the primordial matrix and used his magical powers to give life to spirits and create the elements of the world. The vital element in the mythology of Tabiteuea lies in the fact that the bodies of the first gods discovered by Nareau lay at the sandbank in Tabiteuea South, making Tabiteuea the "mythological genic centre."

The main chapter, chap. IV, consists of a manuscript entitled "The News from Tanaeang," found by the author at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Hawaii and written by a Tabiteuean elder in 1948. The author adds original field information collected at villages in Tabiteuea North in the form of interviews and observations on discussions with elders in 2011. The text contains translations and analysis of narratives of the canoe journeys from the ancestral land and construction of the *maneaba*. The ancestors left the island called Nabanaba and advanced on their journey in their mythic canoes. Calling on island upon island, they disembarked at Tabiteuea, where they occupied ancient residential lands (*kainga*) and constructed the *maneaba*. Once this was accomplished, seats (*boti*) in the *maneaba* buildings, graded by hierarchy, were allocated to each *kainga*.

The author connects the myths with ethnographic accounts. The ranking of seats is reflected in the practices in the *maneaba*, such as the order of speeches or delivering of dishes at feasts. Each seat is also accompanied with vocational rights and obligations, which include mending of the *maneaba*; *kabaraki*, or covering the ridge of the top roof; *koro burae*, or evening out the edge of leaves of the roof; and unrolling new coconut leaf floor mats.

Perhaps one of the most controversial aspects of this volume is the author's use of the oral traditions of the myths, by the elders or earlier ethnographers, as if they were historical facts, although she does recognize the relative "flexibility" of the oral traditions. The significant

point is that the author uncritically posits that the present practices relating to the *maneaba*, no matter whether the villagers are conscious of them or not, are relevant to the mythological world. This relevance is probably made not by historical consciousness but by mythological conjecture.

Tabiteueans may vaguely consider their present practices regarding the *maneaba* as having continued from the mythic age, and disregard the changes since contact with the West. But, in fact, most people of Kiribati today have only inherited fragments of knowledge or know nothing of the mythology. Instead, young children learn their "traditions" not orally from elders but from schoolbooks.

It is apparent that present Kiribati, including Tabiteuea, is not a place for the study of mythology. For the villagers, it is of little significance that knowledge of the mythological traditions is inconsistent or fragmentary. Meetings can be held without detailed knowledge of the myths or the names of the seats in the *maneaba*. Therefore, it is likely the author went through considerable hardship in collecting the mythological knowledge from informants to reconstruct the traditions during her fieldwork. Similarly, if some knowledgeable elders were to insist on mythological legitimacy during discussions, others might oppose them and this could lead to discord. Rather, unconscious discordance may become tangible in the elders' debates through the medium of an ethnographic researcher. Based on this, notwithstanding that the author is cautious of the immutable aspects of writing, she may have no option but to depend mainly on the manuscripts collected by Luomala in 1948.

It is presumed that there is an undoubtable consistency between myths and practices in the *maneaba*, but the author underestimates the power of historical matters and detaches them from reality. In the past, settlement patterns were changed from a scattered arrangement to one where the village is concentrated along a newly constructed road centering on the church (W. H. Geddes, Tabiteuea North. Canberra 1983). There are some villages where the *maneaba* were occasionally relocated to new centers. The devout missionaries, who regarded the *maneaba* as being pagan, banned immoral dances and even usage of the buildings.

In this volume, the term *maneaba* refers only to the traditional village meetinghouses. However, during the British colonial rule and the postindependence era, various new *maneaba* emerged along with social or religious organizations, such as island councils, schools, and churches (K. Kazama, Reorganized Meeting House System. The Focus of Social Life in a Contemporary Village in Tabiteuea South, Kiribati. *People and Culture in Oceania* 17.2001: 83–113). In marked contrast to these new *maneaba*, several traditional *maneaba* disappeared in the mid-2000s in Tabiteuea South. Some buildings were abandoned for nearly a decade without mending and I have witnessed *maneaba* that had collapsed in four out of six villages in the district, although they were fortunately rebuilt in later years.

Although the atoll is not isolated from the outside world, the author does not seem to be interested in the

contemporary lives of the Tabiteueans, who instead of the local products prefer imported provisions of rice, flour, and kava drink from Fiji or the Solomon Islands. The workforce in the villages has decreased because of emigration to the capital for employment or education and many Tabiteuean youths have left to work in German merchant ships or Japanese fishing vessels.

It is certain that many *maneaba* traditions have changed, with myths and knowledge having been forgotten, but we should not overlook the fact that knowledge and practices are being continuously reorganized. Although this book concentrates on the mythological continuity of practices in the *maneaba*, it seems that this view is too partial if anthropologists are to grasp the holistic lives of the people through fieldwork. If readers travel to Tabiteuea with the impression of the myths and traditions as presented in the volume, they might be surprised to witness the villagers' present lives. Therefore, they must search for the people living in the contemporary globalizing world.

Kazuhiro Kazama

Das, Veena, Michael Jackson, Arthur Kleinman, and Bhriupati Singh (eds.): *The Ground Between. Anthropologists Engage Philosophy*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. 351 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-5718-6. Price: £ 16.99

"The Ground Between" is a collection of essays in which leading anthropologists – primarily from universities in the United States – respond to the question of why and how they sometimes turn to philosophy during the "course of concrete projects of research and thought." The book's twelve inspiring essays demonstrate that there are at least a dozen different ways in which such an engagement with philosophy can take form. The contributions all seem to have one thing in common, though, they acknowledge that "for philosophy to have value in our world, it must learn to respond to the puzzles and pressures that an ethnographic engagement with the world brings to light," as the editors state in the introduction. Each of the essays requires attentive reading, as one of the premises of the book is that it is no simple task to clarify what role philosophical reflections might play in ethnographic inquiries. However, we do get some answers. In the following, I choose three essays as examples to address in detail, after which I briefly mention the other nine essays.

Didier Fassin's essay follows the definition of Deleuze and Guattari that philosophy is about creating concepts, whereas anthropology, according to Fassin, is concerned with making sense of the world. The reductive character of Fassin's suggestion aside, this implies that philosophy and anthropology must live parallel lives that only cross each other's regions in the form of disloyal "translations" that exploit the discourses and/or contents of the other discipline. To Fassin, the key criterion for justifying such exploitations is that they must be heuristic, i.e., they must prove to be fruitful pathways to making new discoveries. In order to clarify this point, Fassin opposes two ways of approaching Foucault's theory of biopolitics. On one

side, we have a research proposal produced by a graduate student who, in the formulation of his abstract, is so loyal to the vocabularies of Foucault and Agamben that the proposal reads like a code that is almost impossible to decipher. How could such a mimetic reproduction lead to new discoveries? On the other side, we have the story about Fassin himself, who, at the end of a lecture on biopolitics, received critical comments from a colleague, an expert in Foucault. The colleague found that Fassin's lecture had very little to do with the concept of biopolitics in Foucault and was actually abusing it. But what Fassin realized was that he had actually been exploring a concept through his "abusive" analysis of Foucault that Foucault, paradoxically, had ignored in his theory of biopolitics, namely the concept of life, i.e., life as something which human beings grant a certain worth. On the basis of this new insight, Fassin proposes to address the politics of life as an alternative research program to that of biopolitics.

The role of philosophy in Michael Jackson's contribution is another than that of concept creation. While Jackson understands ethnography as a strategy for close encounters which demands "immersion in a world of others and otherness," he sees philosophy as a strategy to distance ourselves to the world of immediate experience. This act of distancing oneself is motivated primarily by what Jackson calls an existential imperative: To be a human being means to be thrown into the immediacies of life. At the same time we are reflective, sense-making, and sense-seeking creatures. Once in a while, one therefore needs to "stand back, take stock, and gain some purchase over events that one was simply too involved in to see clearly," as Jackson states. He then applies this existential imperative as an analogy to the use of philosophy in anthropological work. It was thus due to the remoteness of Sartre's philosophy from the subject of Jackson's early fieldwork among the Kuranko in West Africa that Jackson gained a perspective on his fieldwork from a certain distance. In that way, the juxtaposition of Sartre's conceptual apparatus with the ethnographic materials helped him in the process of thinking and writing about it.

The theme of Arthur Kleinman's contribution, on the other hand, is the shortcomings of philosophy in regards to an existential longing for wisdom. During the Vietnam War era, Kleinman was stationed in Taiwan where he found himself in search of a direction in his life. He, therefore, spent his spare time reading different philosophers and wrote down phrases and quotes from these studies in a notebook. These philosophical fragments have since been informing all of his work and given him the clear sense that theory is important. But they did not offer him the wisdom he was in search of. This point becomes accentuated during the time of crisis that Kleinman experiences many years later after the loss of his wife, who died after years of suffering. In the moment of his crisis, Kleinman begins rereading his old notebook. But the wise, philosophical words are of no help, and Kleinman realizes that he has been searching for wisdom – the art of living – in the wrong way. So he turns his attention to practice, since he did not discover the true subject of his quest for wisdom by reading philosophers in