ry. Breitinger discusses this particular interdependence extensively in the section devoted to the incorporation of the area of Lake Victoria to the British Empire after a period of scientific exploration (80–85).

In chap. 2, Breitinger focuses his argument about the political dimension of scientific research on the spectacular development of limnology – the study of inland aquatic ecosystems – at the turn of the 19th and 20th century: the African Great Lakes, in the first place Lake Victoria, with their tremendous varieties of relatively unexplored aquatic fauna, constituted an obvious object of study for the rapidly expanding discipline. The chapter ends with the discussion of an institutionalization of limnological research on Lake Victoria in the form of specialized research institutes and their gradual shift of their scientific purposes toward practical goals dictated by the discourse of "development" that was emerging after World War II, and which acquired clearly political dimension in the context of the Cold War.

And precisely this practical or "applied" aspect of exploration and knowledge about the Lake Victoria is the main topic of chap. 3 of Breitinger's book. This refers, in the first place, to the colonial exploration of natural resources, which was oriented on producing profit for the Empire and, as the author observes, led to important alterations of the local social and economic structure – the phenomenon that, on the other hand, rarely benefited indigenous communities. Especially interesting in this context is the section devoted to colonial fishery on Lake Victoria in which the author discusses the institutional link between the exploration of the habitat of the lake to its exploitation. Specifically, the colonial government encouraged the exploitation of lacustrine resources for "local consumption" – the expression that did not necessarily mean local indigenous communities but rather settlements of British colonists (192). Additionally, the administration imposed certain restrictions on indigenous fishers that concerned, primarily, traditional technical means used by them, and applied harsh legal measures to enforce its policies.

Chapter 4 concerns the already mentioned "development era" that coincided with the decolonization processes on the African continent and came to particular fruition in the course of the 1960s. During that period, Africa was discursively constructed as a component of the "underdeveloped Third World" and acted upon accordingly by external agents of "development," for example, FAO. This international organization was also instrumental in the process of transformation of Lake Victoria in an important target of multiple development programs in which the governments of the adjacent littoral states (Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda) also participated. Still, those programs not only addressed structural problems of that region but also – and above all – reflected economic and political interests of major global players of that era.

The last two chapters correspond to the era of growing environmental consciousness in the 1970s and the emergence of the global conservationist movement that also put its mark on the way Lake Victoria was conceptualized and institutionally handled. Thus, in chap. 5, Breitinger discusses reactions of major institutional players to negative environmental and economic consequences of development projects of the previous era, especially the introduction of the Nile perch into the lake, and the resulting disturbance of its biodiversity. Another side effect of those projects was the deepening dependence of local economies on external sources of financing and know-how.

Conservationist projects, undertaken in response to the environmental degradation (discussed in chap. 6), have been the hallmark of large-scale institutional initiatives concerning Lake Victoria in the course of the 1980s, although the first organized efforts in this regard had already been made during the colonial era, e. g., by the British "Society for Preservation of the Wild Fauna and Flora of the Empire," founded in 1903. More importantly, although those programs were still conceptualized, financed, and supervised by external agents, primarily the "International Union for the Conservation of Nature" (IUCN), more efforts have been made toward the local participation, which "constitutes the first moment of liberation for them," Breitinger concludes (402).

Breitinger's book, well researched and carefully edited, is an exercise in social history of multiple organizational programs concerning one natural phenomenon – Lake Victoria. All those initiatives – scientific research, colonial intervention, development, and conservationist projects – were all conceived and financed by external centers of power (academic, political, economic), and as such they represented external interests. In this sense, even the "local participation" – the *conditio sine qua non* of "sustainable development" promoted by NGOs since the 1980s – has not quite been "liberating" whatsoever, as it frequently reflected political agendas that were devised elsewhere. Secondly, although the book does not directly address any anthropological or ethnological issues, I would recommend it to anthropologists interested in that area of Africa, precisely because it concerns broader processes of global character that have had impact, to a greater or lesser extent, on local communities, thus altering their cultures. Breitinger's book expands our view of natural and social processes that have been occurring in that region of Africa by skillfully combining sociological and historical perspectives.

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Cacopardo, Augusto S.: Pagan Christmas. Winter Feasts of the Kalasha of the Hindu Kush. London: Gingko Library, 2016. 314 pp. ISBN 978-1-909942-84-4. Price: £ 40.00

The author of this work under review is, alongside his younger brother Alberto, quite rightly to be regarded as one of the current authorities on the Kalasha, a rapidly decreasing ethnicity that inhabits a small number of val-

leys in Chitral in northwestern Pakistan. As such, both are heirs to an impressive tradition of research on this community that ranges from ethnographies to investigations into the Kalasha spiritual and also linguistic universe, and which is strongly associated with names such as Karl Jettmar (1918–2002), Adolf Friedrich (1914–1956), Peter Snoy (1928–2012), Karl Wutt (*1943) and, if only to a lesser extent, also Herrmann Kreutzmann (*1955).

Having started their research on the Kalasha in September 1973, the present book under review seems to represent nothing less than the author's now easily accessible *opus magnum*, originally published in 2010 as "Natale Pagano" by Sellerio in Palermo. For anyone not convinced by this assessment, a brief look into the bibliography may suffice, where the author lists no less than twenty-four of his and his brother's earlier publications on the matter, beginning with the author's own doctoral dissertation at the Università degli Studi di Firenze in 1974.

As such, the responsibility that results from this impression feels quite heavy upon my shoulders; yet, a review represents only an individual opinion and, therefore, is easily relativised by alternative assessments. Moreover, pre-emptively it shall be acknowledged that I myself am a scholar in the Study of Religions/Study of Islam more than a social anthropologist and, therefore, more comfortable with assessing the author's systematic considerations on the spiritual universe that the Kalasha inhabit. The interest in Kalasha spirituality – I deliberately wish avoid the heavily presuppositional term "religion" here – is certainly warranted: after all, this ethnically and linguistically distinct community appears to have been exceptionally resilient to the perpetual attempts to bring them into the folds of imperial religious frameworks.

Yet, such an exceptional situation bears the significant danger for researchers to be tempted to assume an almost primordial form of spiritually sustained social organization here, preserved from dilution by other and more pervasive of such frameworks by the physical remoteness of the Kalasha in a difficult to access alpine region. It appears that the Himalayas and its extension in the Hindukush for a long time have triggered fascination in this regard, and scholars as well as learned laypeople have looked here for the origin of certain human races (here, e. g., Aryans, as in Mme Blavatsky's sojourn to Tibet in the mid-19th century), languages (one may think of the quest for the origins of the Hungarian language by A. Csoma de Kőrös in the early 19th century), or religions (here, again Mme Blavatsky). Perhaps the gravity of such kind of "archaeology" is best illustrated by the fact that such earlier inquiries were revived by the National Socialists, for whom the geographical as well as spiritual origin of the Aryans was of vital ideological interest (as reflected, e. g., by the German expedition to Tibet in 1938–39, led by zoologist Ernst Schäfer and commissioned as well as financed by the SS-appended *Ahnenerbe*).

With this heritage in mind, it may not surprise that I am finding it more than only slightly discomforting when Cacopardo, in as late as 2017, states his mission as follows: "Among the many points of interest of this [geographical] area there is one circumstance that makes it absolutely unique: if on one side it has traits as the ones we indicated, considered typically of societies once termed 'primitive', on the other it is geographically located in the very heart of Asia, in a region adjoining areas that, from the remotest times – when the Indo-Aryan world had not yet taken form – had become centres of some of the most ancient civilizations on Earth" (25).

For me, these and related lines point to a major difficulty I am having with the book under review, as I shall be discussing in more detail further below, not least because it seems to me that they are the result of a conscious theoretical and methodological decision made by the author. Yet, before getting there, I wish to indicate that the bulk of the present work consists of Cacopardo's meticulous ethnography of a sequence of annual winter solstice festivals, called *chaum'os* in the Kalasha language, in the valley of Birir (81–194) roughly between November and February. The same festival had earlier been documented by Friedrich and Snoy (1955–56), and Jettmar (1975), respectively, although, and this makes a significant difference, in the two northern valleys of Rumbur and Bumburet. The conclusions which these earlier researchers have drawn regarding the purity of the Kalasha spiritual universe as presented in the *chaum'os*, however, are seriously challenged by Cacopardo's own investigation: he was able to affirm the Birir variety of the festival as the dominant and primordial one, relegating the "northern model" to "a marginal variant" (7). From the ethnographic perspective this appears to be a significant insight, especially in light of the prevalent assumption that the pressure by imperial religious frameworks had come from the lowlands in the south and not across the significantly lesser permeable high-altitude ranges of Pamir and Hindukush. In my eyes, this ethnography, comprising of chapters 4 and 5 (81–194), is the most valuable part of the work.

The following chapter 6, entitled "The Deep Meaning of the Kalasha Chaumos" (195–222), is almost equally useful, because it consists in Cacopardo's generally convincing attempt to relate the various rituals performed during *chaum'os* and the other densely described winter feasts to the Kalasha cosmogony, and from here to their ideas of sociopolitical order. However, it is this very chapter that paves the way for the last larger part of the book, the one I am critically concerned with. It seems that Cacopardo himself had been inspired here by the works of Jettmar some forty years ago, who appears to have been puzzled by the depth of the Kalasha cosmogony as well as the parallels with similar systematic considerations by other religious communities in the region, here predominantly the Nizārī-Ismāʿīlī community which today constitutes about 36 % of the total population of Chitral. While Jettmar's view on cultural transfer

between Ismāʿīlīs and Kalasha, at least as a hypothesis, appears quite plausible in the light of empirical circumstances, Cacopardo, in fact, follows a different trajectory. Presumably attempting to establish the Kalasha as an original source of intellectual stimulation for their environment, rather than regarding them at the receiving end of more elaborate and abstract ideas, he embarks on the dangerous path that I had touched upon in my opening paragraphs.

What, in fact, becomes a quest for the primordial Indo-Aryan religion, however, required fundamental theoretical and methodological steps. These steps Cacopardo fleshes out already in the early pages of his book (9–12), which to me suggests that this objective had been his right from the onset. Consequently, he explicitly dissociates himself from what he calls "contemporaneist trend" (9), that is, the investigation of communities in the here and now, which he says is the dominant one in Social Anthropology at present. Rather, he chose to follow a somewhat anticyclical research agenda that draws its main inspiration from Francesco Remotti's 2014 manifesto "Per un'antropologia inattuale" (missing in the bibliography; in the reference, the year is 2013 given!) and, consequently, is "looking afar in search of the Other, in space and in time" (10). Equally dismissive of current debates is the author with regard to the hermeneutical questions, which pose themselves crucially in any anthropological research and have – in my eyes rightly so – formed an inevitable part of contemporary anthropological theory and methodology. That Cacopardo elected to remain within the confines of classical anthropology informs the entire work under review and impairs substantially with its usefulness, beyond the actual ethnography and the immediate explanation of Kalasha cosmology and social organisation as expressed in the various *chaum'os* rituals. Unfortunately, however, the fact that, for the latter, Cacopardo relies heavily on the quite controversial phenomenologist of religion, Mircea Eliade, does not really contribute to enhancing the substance of his analysis. As a consequence, namely, he starts to associate other, and in my view culturally distinct, solstice festivals, such as the carnival and Christmas in Europe at around the same time of the year as *chaum'os* (242–250), in my eyes a highly problematic approach which ultimately resulted in the contradictory main title of this book.

Indeed, during *chaum'os* Kalasha social norms get reversed, the usually strict and hierarchical gender segregation based on the axiomatic determination of females as impure (see 37–39) is temporarily abandoned. This, however, is the farthest extent to which I would stretch the parallels with carnival and its historically related festivals, such as the ancient Roman Saturnalia and Lupercalia. Someone who is on the lookout for a primordial Indo-European religion, however, needs to account for the strong Christian transformation of earlier spiritual communal traditions elsewhere. When Cacopardo investigates the Kalasha cosmology, based, as he argues, on a sequence of "regeneration," "fertility," and "unification" or "communion" (213–215), he compares what he regards remnants of a pre-Christian – he calls it "archaic" – ritualistic culture in Europe, markedly impacted by elements of Vedic cosmology (210–212 and 225–239). Again, this reminds me strongly of the mythological premise of basic continuation (*Kontinuitätsprämisse*), which predetermined the Germanic quest for its mythical roots since the Enlightenment that found its most disturbing expression in the activities of the *Ahnenerbe*. Indeed, this proximity alone would have fully justified the critical intervention by current theorists in Social Anthropology, which Cacopardo, as explicitly stated above, decided to leave out in the cold. That other established academics, such as Harvard Indologist Michael Witzel in his "Origins of the World's Mythologies" (2012), follow a similar line, in my view, does not really suffice as justification to pursue an anticyclical research programme. Instead of merely supplementing the earlier studies of Jettmar, Friedrich, and Snoy, and theoretically framing the research through the little critical lens of Eliade's phenomenological approach, I personally would have preferred a stronger sense for the precarious situation that the Kalasha community finds itself in today.

In the work under review, however, the implications of the geographical proximity of the Kalasha valleys to areas around the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, which are strongly dominated by Sunnī Muslim supremacy outfits that include the *Ṭālibān*, the *Tablīghī Jamāʿat*, and the *Jamāʿat-i Islāmī*, are not given much space. In fact, the impact of what Cacopardo calls the "Afghan conflict" since 1978 is appreciated with slightly more than one page (39f.). Also, the relationship between Kalasha and Khowar-speaking Muslims, quite a significant number descend from Kalasha converts, does merit only a brief and, moreover, largely uncritical discussion (63–66). Even the brief account of the history of Islamisation of Chitral and its adjacent area to the west, the Kāfiristān-turned-Nūristān, which is based almost exclusively on colonial archives and a few not very substantial secondary readings (29–36), does not indicate the degree of coercion used to discourage the Kalasha from continuing their adherence to non-Islamic spiritual frameworks.

Recent anthropological investigations, predominantly carried out by young Pakistani researchers such as Muhammad Kashif Ali of the University of Gujrat in northern Punjab, helps to adjust the rather glossy image of Kalasha-Muslim interface that is painted by Cacopardo. His work highlights instead the active involvement of activists of the *Tablīghī Jamāʿat* in dramatically undermining the basis of subsistence of the Kalasha by hijacking their livestock and taking it over the border to Nūristān, where it is redistributed among Sunnī Muslims. As a consequence Kalasha are increasingly forced to seek other forms of subsistence: massive migration into the Muslim-dominated towns results in accelerated competition in the already hotly contested labour market of Chitral, and oftentimes the only viable economic

alternative for the Kalasha appears to be as folkloristic photo models for tourists.

In sum: I am afraid I will remain somewhat ambivalent about the book as a whole. Its main part, consisting of the ethnography and the explanation of the Kalasha cosmology through the rituals performed during *chaum'os*, is thorough and valuable, even if probably best read together with the respective earlier ethnographies by Jettmar, Friedrich, and Snoy. The second part of the work, however, which comprises the phenomenological comparison of *chaum'os* with Vedic Indian as well as Christianized European solstice festivals, impairs, at least in my view, strongly with the quality and overall usefulness of the work. A more positive appraisal of current trends and debates in Social Anthropology and beyond would have made a much stronger contribution to that end, because, after all, the Kalasha, despite their decreasing numbers, are very much part of a wider world beyond their three native valleys and surely deserve to be appreciated beyond framing them as guardians over ancient spiritual views and practices that have at best only little changed over time. It is hoped that Cacopardo, who, after all, is one of the few contemporary authorities on the Kalasha, has his *opus magnum* still in petto.

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Carrico, Kevin: The Great Han. Race, Nationalism, and Tradition in China Today. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017. 264 pp. ISBN 978-0-520-29550-6. Price: $ 29.95

This book is composed of six main chapters excluding the introduction and the conclusion. In the introduction, Carrico briefly unpacks ideas of nationalism, race, and tradition before turning to his theoretical approach in chap. 1 which dissects theories of nationalism and psychoanalysis; particularly through the writing of Jacques Lacan, Carrico cultivates a theory that inspects the "relationship between national ideas" and "lived reality within the national space" (27). Through this approach, Carrico contends that the fantasy of nationhood never quite lives up to the lived experience of the "self" or the "world" and as a result national desire is always already established on an "unattainable and imaginary wholeness" (27).

In chap. 2, Carrico examines the Han clothing movement's construction of Han-ness and tradition; the chapter begins with a history of the movement before examining Han clothing enthusiast's narration of Chinese history more broadly. After which, Carrico draws attention to the way his respondents view Han-ness as seemingly "unmarked," "disenchanted," and "modern" in comparison to the identities of China's 55 ethnic minorities (47). Paradoxically, Carrico proposes that the movement fetishises the so-called "ethnic characteristics" of China's minorities to "overcome the blandness of majority identity" (51). Then, Carrico discusses how Hanfu subjects construct a fantastical idea of Chinese tradition as "a stabilizing source of identity" (54) and an "imaginary" solution to the "confounding problems of the present" (55); importantly, Carrico notes that the movement understands the Han as the "victim of a cruel modernity rather than its enactor" (57).

In chap. 3, Carrico explores the life stories and experiences of four of his anonymised respondents: Liang, Yan, Xia, and Tsin. Through each of these unstable and sad accounts, Carrico demonstrates that each of these subjects finds forms of meaning, dignity, control, and hope in the Han clothing movement; a movement that provides them with the "image of a better life and an otherwise elusive sense of prestige" (78). Chapter 3 ends with a short and very humorous encounter with Hanfuist "Brother Emperor," who Carrico describes as a detested outsider on the edge, but still very much part of the movement's self-interested and self-aggrandising agenda. In chap. 4, Carrico discusses 1) the symbolic construction of Hanfu clothing; 2) the rituals involved in the Hanfu movement, and 3) the specific role of photography in the construction of the movement's practices. Through these materialities and performativities, Carrico suggests that the Han clothing movement manages to stabilise its idealised and illusory identity "in response to the gray and perpetually uncertain and unstable world in which they live" (129).

In chap. 5 Carrico scrutinises racialised conspiracy theories that have emerged through the movement in response to the "Manchus," a "largely Sinicized minority group" (131). Worryingly, Carrico outlines how the movement labels China's Manchurian ethnic minority as a genocidal group or "cabal" whose power never fully ended with the fall of the Qing dynasty; instead, as Carrico demonstrates, the Manchu ethnic group is perceived as an insidious clandestine force whose power has extended into the reform era "through the fields of politics, economics, and culture" (137). Chapter 6 moves on to explore gender and sexual issues. Carrico declares that "a backward-looking and essentially misogynistic view of gender" is given "legitimacy through the notion of 'tradition' and the possessive will of nationalism" in the movement (159). Thus, "modern" womanhood is criticised by Han clothing enthusiasts as "overpowering" (163), who, in turn, offer a purified version of femininity based on "obedience," "chastity," and "reliance" (165f.). Moreover, within certain movement discourses, women are also regarded as national "resources" that are being continually pilfered by outsiders ("foreigners" and "black people") who now pose a threat to the genetic patrilineal purity of the Han race and the national body (168f., 170).

Finally, the conclusion wraps up Carrico's argument with discussions on neo-traditionalism in contemporary China. In this section, Carrico investigates a "series of structurally comparable phenomena in contemporary Chinese society" (192), including a Confucian academy, the Confucian constitution writing of Jiang Qing and the