

ed to Chiang Mai Province, and who have faced hardships and social stress in confrontation with the Thai authorities. Thueang provided the Dara'ang with food, blankets, infrastructural buildings (roads and bridges), besides from blessing them and miraculously providing the Dara'ang with food and protecting them from harm. This is a case in which the *khru*ba is clearly identified as savior, but also as a powerful patron, who is not only able to control the field of merit, but also with invaluable access to resources, overcoming marginalization.

The fine chapter by Tatsuki Kataoka is very complementary as it shows the close loyalty of the non-Buddhist and non-Thai community of the highland Lahu with the most famous *khru*ba of the region today – Khruba Bunchum. The Lahu regard Khruba Bunchum as a God-King and have strong millenarian, apocalyptic expectations on the advent of the future Buddha or God-King, as outlined above.

The Shan, discussed in length by the chapter of Amporn Jirattikorn, see Bunchum even as a reincarnation of the Buddha. Using a similar frame as Kwanchewan, outlined above, argues that we ought to go beyond the framework of reciprocity, redistribution, and the moral economy idea put forward in much of Buddhist scholarship. Amporn J. has the courage to go new ways by exploring postmodern forms of branding and promoting the *khru*ba in the social media, such as facebook and twitter. These postmodern forms of communication connect the *khru*ba and his image with different forms of followers: Impoverished highland communities, the Thai urban middle class, and the Thai urban wealthy elites. Through a rich examination of the location of Khruba Bunchum in the local geography as well as political economy, Amporn J. is able to move into new directions of Buddhist studies. Amporn J. shows that the *khru*ba today not only fits the bill of millenarian expectations, but uses his position in the spiritual to mobilize capital and labor. In this sense, Khruba Bunchum meets the expectations and modern needs of asceticism (in the forest-monk imaging) and the status of a cultural entrepreneur: He is a wealthy ascetic who is supposed to spend all his fortune into Buddhist revivalism. In economic terms, we can say that merit is the currency and charisma the capital of modern Lanna Buddhism. In sum, the book is recommended to scholars working on Thai Buddhism, on charisma, on Buddhism, and economic relations, and scholars of mainland Southeast Asia.

Alexander Horstmann

**Cook, Suzanne:** *The Forest of the Lacandon Maya. An Ethnobotanical Guide.* New York: Springer, 2016. 379 pp. ISBN 978-1-4614-9110-1. Price: \$ 209.00

“The Forest of the Lacandon Maya. An Ethnobotanical Guide” by Suzanne Cook, reflects a new lens on Maya ethnobotany. She demonstrates the Lacandon intimate knowledge of the Maya forest as a garden, so integral to the value of the Maya forest. This knowledge is fast becoming history itself as each elder with accumulated wealth of this understanding passes out of our realm. With each passing, we lose volumes of information and with

the impact of globalization, the importance of this knowledge, that may appear irrelevant as in its unwritten form it is easily overlooked. The reality is completely the opposite. They are the heroes of the Maya forest who practice, as part of daily life, the language of the Maya forest. The conservation and management of the Maya forest depends on the Maya forest garden.

This increasingly ephemeral knowledge – largely because of the fact that it is a practice – has greater importance now more than ever before. Knowledge of the plants and their active agents, significant properties, specific media, relevant remedies, exact components, and universal aspects revealed by the Maya and logged in this book is largely a process of decades, centuries, even millennia of experimentation. The full appreciation of these potentials is only touched upon in this important book of Suzanne Cook. What we need are many Suzanne Cooks along with young people following in the footsteps of their elders to gain from the vision that one only can acquire when embedded in and relying on the local environment.

This book is designed to show how the Maya of the Lacandon Forest practices not only conserved the forest but facilitated its regeneration, a thesis promoted by Nations and Nigh (The Evolutionary Potential of Lacandon Maya Sustained-Yield Tropical Forest Agriculture. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 36.1980/1: 1–30) and pursued by Ford and Nigh (The Maya Forest Garden. Eight Millennia of Sustainable Cultivation of the Tropical Woodlands. Walnut Creek 2015). Cook argues that without the forest, the ecological knowledge and practice of the Lacandon would have no context and that the fates of both are deeply connected and “depend on the other to survive.”

Set in the Lacandon Forest, part of the western Maya area, the book provides a basis for appreciating the role of plants among the Lacandon culture. Cook describes her work with her able consultants who are both willing to share and to help her document the importance of nearly every facet of the forest that surrounds them. The methodological research she evokes relies on her Lacandon partners, whose knowledge is chronicled from a variety of individuals, sources that include women and men, young and old. As this matters! Children, whose views of the world are at a lower height, enjoy a different set of plants based on their reach!

Beginning with Cook’s heartfelt acknowledgements, the book provides an introduction to the lowland Maya and how to read her book. She follows with an overview of the language and geography. The core of her work is presented in chap. 4 and chap. 5 on the role of plants among the Lacandon. This is where her botanical and ethnographic inventory is presented. These two chapters are impressive and make this an amazing reference book, with plant species categorized with Lacandon and scientific names and listed by all the variety of household utilities from food, ritual, construction, adornment, construction, and more.

The book is liberally illustrated with nearly 500 color photographs that include plants and their context, explaining the resource, the production, the uses, and the setting.

The appendices are important references as well. They treat the terminology for botany, seasons, and weather. In addition, there are transcriptions of Lacandon texts that are particularly insightful and should be available online in video (URL provided does not include these promised components) or as an accompanying DVD (not included).

Useful plants are compiled in tables based on household uses that are fundamental to understand the variety of resources even one plant can provide. These tables include the relevant parts of the plant that are used. If it is edible, is it the fruit or the spout? If it is used in construction, what part of the house frame might it serve? And for the jeweler, is it only the seed? These tables and the later descriptions are organized by Lacandon words. They are very helpful in understanding the variety of resources embedded in the forest and deserve to be reviewed with ethnobotanical data across the Maya forest for comparable uses. A review by scientific names of the uses itemized on Table 4.2 reveals many comparable plants in the greater Petén and with similarities to Lacandon names used by other lowland Maya.

Another important aspect of information is that where the resource materials are found. Secondary forests are a common source of materials, and this coincides with both the importance of the Maya milpa cycle (called fallow in this book but in fact is not at all fallow) and the archaeological faunal data. ("Fallow" means an unseeded plowed field. The Lacandon nor any traditional milpa farmers plow, and as well demonstrated in this book, the regenerating forests are treasure troves of useful resources.) Hardly abandoned fields, they are intensely managed and selected landscapes that are strategically stocked with utility. The management of secondary forests is corroborated with the accumulating archeological data from Maya faunal collections that reflect animals that frequent secondary forests. Regenerating forests are an essential resource, frequently visited and deliberately managed for the acquisition of plants and animals, exactly the forest garden that Cook's ethnobotany reveals.

Cook's book will serve as a benchmark reference on Maya ethnobotany that builds on the historical research before her. It merits much attention and will set the stage for the conservation of the language of the Maya forest, a forest that is reliant on human manipulation for its co-existence.

Anabel Ford

**Covington-Ward, Yolanda:** *Gesture and Power. Religion, Nationalism, and Everyday Performance in Congo.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2016. 287 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-6036-0. Price: \$ 25.95

This book combines historical and anthropological methods to explore political uses of bodily gesture such as handshakes, ecstatic trembling, and dance by the *ngunza* prophets of Lower Congo and as part of nationalist propaganda in Mobutu's Zaire. It is based on archival research and ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the territory of Luozi in Lower Congo, an area where earlier scholars Kimpianga Mahaniah and John Janzen carried out their research. The study appears at a timely moment when the

Democratic Republic of Congo's state monopoly of force is once again challenged by political uprisings across the country, which have an important spiritual dimension and, as this book reminds us, are part of an older historical pattern of prophetic resistance.

The book's greatest strength lies in the author's use of her own bodily presence as a method of inquiry: her role as an Afro-American researcher in a region of the DR Congo, where the prophet Simon Kimbangu prophesied in 1921 that one day Black Americans would return to their homeland to liberate the Kongo people from White colonial domination. That nearly a century after the prophecy was uttered it remains the popular framework through which to explain the presence of a young Afro-American speaks for itself in a country that continues to be torn by greed, exploitation, and hardship. The book is a powerful reminder that race and power relations are omnipresent in the production of ethnographic data, and that the human body, including the researcher's own body, is an arena for memory production. The author's concept of "performative encounter" is useful to grasp these body-centred yet power-stricken intricacies.

This is not a book about gesture and power in the capital city of Kinshasa, nor does it address special handshakes, dress, and linguistic codes or the innumerable dance moves persistently recrafted and performed by young Kinois in the quest for aesthetic unison and generational identification. Instead, Covington-Ward focuses on the political history and use of body techniques such as possessive trembling (*zakama*) by Ngunza prophets, political dance (*animation politique*) in Mobutu's Zaire, and the "traditional" Kongo hand gestures (*bula makonko*) in their everyday performance. In all these instances the body and its gestures are the site of either domination or the struggle for liberation.

The introduction opens with a description of *bula makonko* among the followers of the Bundu dia Kongo (BdK) spiritual movement, which was founded in 1969 by Ne Muanda Nsemi, who was born in Luozi territory. Contesting the legitimacy of both Christianity as well as the Congolese state (DRC), BdK is a very resolute version of Kongo messianic nationalism, which has been violently persecuted by the Congolese state. At first sight the decision to study Kongo prophets (*ngunza*) is surprising, given that they are among the most intensely studied religious movements in Africa. The choice to focus on the staunch and understudied BdK movement, however, is intriguing, given the difficulty to access a movement that is openly persecuted and suffered a crackdown by special forces of the Congolese police in 2007, entailing the death of allegedly at least 100 people. The ethnographic data presented in this book were collected before this date. Moreover, putting the body politics of Kongo prophetism (*ngunzism*) and Mobutu's *animation politique* into historical continuity is a truly creative move.

Chapter 1 is a personalised account of the author's fieldwork experience in Kinshasa and Luozi in the mid-2000s. The reflexive ponderings about the "normative power" of gender and complexion, which she herself experienced in a number of discriminating instances, will no