making, class, social differentiation, and inequality in the contemporary European East. Anthropologists and other social scientists working in this part of the world and elsewhere will find the collection intellectually stimulating and inspiring. Gediminas Lankauskas

Schuerkens, Ulrike: Geschichte Afrikas. Eine Einführung. Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2009. 298 pp. ISBN 978-3-8252-3116-3. (Geschichte der Kontinente, 3) Preis: € 19.90

Mit Ulrike Schuerkens unternimmt eine in Frankreich ausgebildete Sozialanthropologin und Soziologin den Versuch, ein Studienbuch über die Gesamtgeschichte Afrikas und seiner gesellschaftlichen Entwicklungen zu verfassen. Letztlich entscheidet sie sich für Abschnitte von meist nur 1–3 Seiten und wählt damit fast eine lexikalische Form. Das Buch umfasst von der frühen Vorgeschichte bis zur postkolonialen Zeit im Prinzip alle Aspekte der afrikanischen Entwicklung. Es ist in drei große Kapitel gegliedert: Geschichtsschreibung über Afrika, Historische Grunderfahrungen und in der Hauptsache einem chronologischen Überblick in 12 Abschnitten, die in sich regional und systematisch strukturiert sind. Die Abschnitte über die weiterführende Literatur konzentrieren sich auf die Literatur bis ca 2000. Allerdings lässt sich sagen, dass ein älterer Forschungsstand und die Diskussionslage der 1980er zugrunde liegen. Das Buch ist in einer klaren Sprache geschrieben. Abstraktionen und Vereinfachungen sind dabei unvermeidlich.

Nach Stichproben zu den einzelnen Abschnitten lässt sich sagen, dass die Aussagen und Bewertungen in diesem generellen Rahmen durchwegs verlässlich sind und dementsprechend als Studienbuch geeignet. Allerdings ist der Preis dieses Überblickes, dass die einzelnen Gesellschaften Afrikas in ein- bis zweiseitigen regionalen Überblicken sonst nur in den systemtischen Teilen in dem jeweiligen Kontext genannt werden. Letztlich setzt das Buch doch eine gute Kenntnis der afrikanischen Länder und ihrer Geschichte voraus, auch wenn die jeweiligen Einordnungen zutreffen. Dass für das Thema des Sklavenhandels und seiner Auswirkungen für Zentralafrika eine Seite und für das Gesamtphänomen zwei Seiten verwendet werden, die Themen des "langen Endes" der Sklaverei, die Geschichte des Sklavenhandels durch die Sahara und den Indischen Ozean ausgeblendet bleiben, zeigen, dass die knappe lexikalische Form in zentralen Bereichen Unterlassungen verursacht.

Ein weiterer möglicher Einwand gegen das Buch ist naheliegend: es transportiert das generelle Sprechen über Afrika – wenn gegliedert, dann nur nach den unterschiedlichen Kolonialsystemen, nicht nach der historischen Tiefendimension der afrikanischen Gesellschaften. Damit kommt die historische Vielfalt der afrikanischen Großregionen und historisch gewachsenen Gesellschaften wenig zur Geltung. Der vereinheitlichenden Wirkung von Kolonialismus und Mission wird ein wohl übergroßes und im Grunde durch die lexikalische Form der betonten Faktizität ein fast positives Gewicht gegeben. Die wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen translokalen Beziehungen bleiben ausgeblendet. Die Vielfalt der religiösen Prozesse ist genannt aber doch weitgehend zu pauschal verfasst. Der Urbanisierungsprozess bleibt unerörtert.

Dennoch, wer schnelle Orientierung will, kann mit diesem Buch arbeiten, wenn auch Bücher, die sich auf das 18.–20. Jh. konzentrieren wie Harding oder Marx, die Vorzüge der Beschränkung auf einen engeren Zeitrahmen nutzen. Selbst die Gesamtdarstellung von Iliffe, die die Vorgeschichte einschließt, enthält wesentlich mehr analytische und letztlich auch historische Reflexion.

Helmut Bley

Shaw, Alison: Negotiating Risk. British Pakistani Experiences of Genetics. New York: Berghahn Books, 2009. 283 pp. ISBN 978-1-84545-548-4. Price: $ 90.00

Advances in clinical understanding of genetics over the last 40 years, leading to the sequencing of the entire human genome, have had huge implications for the ways in which we think about our bodies, our identities, and our relationships with others. New forms of risk have been identified and need to be managed; new decisions have to be made, generating new discourses of blame. Prenatal diagnosis offers parents the possibility of reducing the risk of giving birth to a child with severe genetic or chromosomal abnormalities; it also presents couples with seemingly impossible choices which throw into sharp focus the deeply embedded nature of understandings and responses to genetic risk within the wider social and cultural contexts of people's lives.

Alison Shaw's latest book grapples with these complexities, bringing together insights from anthropology, health service provision, and clinical genetics, in an ethnographic study of a British Pakistani population in High Wycombe. The starting point is that consanguineous marriages, which are common among the British Pakistani population, carry an elevated genetic risk for any offspring. Shaw explains the genetics behind this, which relate in particular to the appearance of rare recessive conditions in the offspring of consanguineously married couples, but points out that, although the risks are 2–3 times as high as for unrelated couples, the absolute risks are still low (more than 90% probability of giving birth to an unaffected child).

The first part of the book is devoted to a discussion of the phenomenon of close-kin marriage from anthropological and historical perspectives. Shaw contrasts medical and public perceptions of consanguineous marriage and genetic risk with the experiences and understandings of the British Pakistanis with whom she worked. Shaw sees genetics as part of a modern discourse of risk, which presents itself as being "scientifically neutral" but which, she argues (drawing on Mary Douglas' work), is inherently moral and political. She thus situates the salience of recent debates over the genetic risks of cousin marriages within the context of the political and social marginalisation of those ethnic minority groups that practise close-kin marriage. While consanguineous marriage is held within U.K. public discourse to be abnormal and sometimes morally dubious, Shaw shows that the prac-

tice is very widespread, both in contemporary societies globally and historically within Europe. The continuing practice of cousin marriage among young British Pakistanis must be understood within a keenly-felt desire to maintain and reinforce transnational family relationships. Contrary to the popular media representation that equates cousin marriage with forced marriage, many of the young people interviewed by Shaw actively chose to marry their cousins, citing emotional, as well as social and cultural motivations. Many were aware of the genetic risks, but regarded marriage within the family as "safer" than marrying "strangers" in other respects.

The second part of the book focuses on couples attending a genetics clinic for prenatal testing and diagnosis. Through a series of often very poignant and moving case studies, Shaw traces the ways in which couples engage with, negotiate and respond to medical surveillance and diagnostic uncertainty, how people respond to and make decisions about reproductive risk (such as whether or not to terminate a pregnancy), often based on uncertain information and diagnoses, and how parents cope with infant death or the knowledge that an unborn child is unlikely to survive. One key theme to emerge from these accounts is that the processes through which people interpret and negotiate genetic risk are not straightforward or easily predictable. While certain factors such as religious faith, family circumstances, and understanding of clinical genetics may shape these processes, they do not determine them. Instead, we get a highly nuanced account of the complexities and variation of responses to genetic risk and misfortune, in which people make use of culturally-situated knowledge in idiosyncratic ways to make sense of, and respond to, their situations. There is a very clear message here to health professionals who may, in an attempt to be "culturally sensitive," make unfounded and problematic assumptions – for example that a Muslim woman would never wish to terminate a pregnancy. Shaw argues that clinicians should strive instead for "cultural competence," which entails ensuring effective communication and "raising professionals' awareness of the socially and culturally shaped nature of their own values and practices, and of the potential for stereotyping or making ethnocentric judgments about patients whose values and practices differ" (245).

This is a sensitively written and engaging account of a very difficult topic – both intellectually and emotionally. Shaw's long-standing research with British Pakistanis in the Oxford area is very evident in her ability to develop strong relationships with informants, based on shared understandings and empathy. Shaw manages to produce a book which is both academically rigorous and highly readable, indeed compelling. This is not only a remarkable achievement in itself; it also means that the volume can – and should – be read not just by anthropologists and other social scientists, but by health professionals and policy makers. It should be compulsory reading for medical students!

Kate Hampshire

Shipton, Parker: Mortgaging the Ancestors. Ideologies of Attachment in Africa. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. 327 pp. ISBN 978-0-300-11602-1. Price: £ 35.00

In "Mortgaging the Ancestors," Parker Shipton effectively challenges the economic logic of land privatization that centers on the use of land as collateral for loans (the mortgage) to be used to develop agricultural land. He argues that this logic fails in the case of rural Nyanza where he has conducted research among the Luo people for several decades. The reason it fails, in essence, is due to the nature of attachment of people to land, attachments that cannot be reduced to the nexus of cash exchange, of land for money. In the process of making this argument, he reviews a considerable literature on property rights reaching back to enlightenment (and even earlier) philosophers in Europe, more contemporary economic theory, development policy and practice, and anthropological perspectives on Luo culture. The book paints a broad canvass and draws from several disciplines, though at heart is an anthropological study. In some respects it reviews ground that has been fairly well covered in other studies (his own and many others') regarding the problems attendant on privatizing land in Africa and introducing technologies such as mortgages (e.g., failure to maintain land registers, inability of banks to foreclose on mortgage defaulters, the male bias in allocating private property rights). However, it is an interesting and valuable contribution in that it illuminates aspects of the Luo case as well as the broader Kenyan situation that are all too relevant today. Indeed, as I write this review – in Kenya – the country is only two weeks away from its second constitutional referendum in five years and land issues, especially land rights, are among the most contentious in the debates over the proposed constitution.

Through the ten chapters of the book, Shipton moves from a review of early and later theorizing about the nature of property and property rights, through ethnographic examination of how Luo people relate to land, the history of land privatization, and operation of the mortgage in Luo country, to contemporary tensions in Kenya over land manifesting in violence in several areas of the country, and concludes – coming full circle – with reflections on the nature of property. Regarding theory, Shipton's central premise is that land privatization and the mortgage are Western constructs that are ill-fitted to the African situation and were imposed by modernizing colonial and postcolonial regimes pursuing a vision of "the modern" that is incompatible with realities on the ground. Theories of property rights that emerged at the time of the Industrial Revolution in Europe have held sway in development policy circles and been most thoroughly implemented in Kenya starting with the Swynnerton Plan in the 1950s and continuing after independence and up to the present with the progressive privatization of land in many parts of the country. Ironically, in wake of the US financial crisis, most particularly the mortgage foreclosure crisis, one may wonder whether this instrument fits contemporary realities anywhere!

Following the discussion of theory are several chap-