

stehende Leserschaft weltweit zu erreichen. Vielleicht erfüllen sich auch die Hoffnungen der Autorin, dass sie vor allem mit ihren Ausführungen zu den Altersgruppen und Heiratsallianzen, denen ihre besondere Aufmerksamkeit gilt, die Studien und Forschungen von Kollegen mit anderen regionalen Schwerpunkten stimulieren kann. Mit Interesse wird man auf weitere Publikationen der Autorin warten dürfen.

Anton Quack

**Dennis, Philip A.:** *The Miskitu People of Awastara*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004. 312 pp. ISBN 0-292-70281-7. Price: \$ 22.95

Awastara is a community of 1,328 Miskitu Indians located on the northern Caribbean coast (Miskitu Coast) of Nicaragua, north of the port town of Puerto Cabezas. Philip Dennis, a cultural anthropologist, spent two major periods of fieldwork here, in 1978–79 and in 1999–2000, before and after the tumultuous years of the 1980s Sandinista conflict. This volume describes and sometimes contrasts various aspects of life in Awastara as Dennis experienced it during both visits. It is the third major monograph to date on Miskitu life in the 20–21st centuries, joining Bernard Nietschmann's "Between Land and Water" (New York 1973), an account of Tasbapauni, another coastal community south of Puerto Cabezas, and my own "Asang" (Gainesville 1971), an inland riverine community several hundred miles up the Rio Coco, the boundary between Nicaragua and Honduras. As one would expect, Dennis on occasion compares select aspects of life in Awastara with material in these two earlier ethnographies, although much more comparative work could have been offered to enrich his commentary.

Generally speaking, Dennis takes an anecdotal and personal, journalistic approach to his work. He makes it clear that he wants to present a description of his own life in Awastara with primary intent to provide interesting reading (21). Thus, his volume is not meant to be a full community study in the usual scholarly sense of the term but a more selective account that focuses on the daily life of the family with whom he lived and on other personal experiences he encountered. Dennis is successful in achieving this goal, although at the cost of sacrificing ethnographic depth and detail in some areas of local life. There are no footnotes or endnotes; nor does his account offer much in the way of theoretical or in-depth analytical interpretation.

One example of the consequence of these limitations will suffice to illustrate the point. One of the ongoing discussions of Miskitu scholarly debate concerns the extent to which the Miskitu ideal of matrilineal marital residence (for some scholars a key symbol of Miskitu ethnic identity) is actually achieved or is compromised by trends toward patrilineal residence. Dennis indicates individual examples of both matri- and patrilineal residence occurring in Awastara. For example, in the extended household in which he lived one married daughter resided matrilocally and three married sons resided patrilocally (12, 80 f.). He also notes that women prefer to

live matrilocally while prosperous men like their sons to reside patrilocally (81). However, Dennis provides no substantive information on overall marital residence patterns or trends in the community as a whole, although a full map of all households was made and 900 notebook pages of information were collected in the field (21). I regard an omission of this sort as both rather curious and unfortunate, for it will reduce the usefulness of this important volume, regardless of its readability, for future students of Miskitu culture.

Nonetheless, Dennis does touch on a number of daily activities in Awastara with observations on subsistence, education, health and curing, religion, community affairs, and leadership. He also highlights several unique factors of Awastara life. For example, this community is one of two coastal Miskitu villages (Tasbapauni is the other) relying heavily on green sea turtle fishing for consumption and as a source of monetary income. Dennis provides a useful and detailed account of boat ownership and construction, fishing trips to off-shore turtle islands, and other turtle-related activities. Also, in recent years Awastara has been seriously affected by drug, especially cocaine, trafficking. Drug runners en route from Colombia to the United States pass along the Central American Caribbean coast and, when intercepted by government patrol boats, throw packages of drugs overboard. Large quantities of cocaine are thus washed up on small off-shore turtling islands and on the mainland coastal beaches, available to whomever comes along. Consequently, Awastara residents can sell cocaine to other communities as an added source of income, small-scale household manufacture and sale of crack is common, and drug use and addiction has become a major problem in the village, especially among young men, leading to increased thievery and dangerous violence in the community. People now are fearful and Awastara has earned the reputation of being a rogue community (269).

In one of the most interesting sections of the book, Dennis compares the cocaine-induced disruption, even chaos, of life in Awastara with the orderly investment of drug profits in elaborate new housing and useful community development projects in the neighboring community of Sandy Bay, which is prospering to an unparalleled degree as a result of local cocaine finds. He identifies community leadership as one of the most telling features. Sandy Bay is under the forceful thumb of a shrewd, no-nonsense town headman who firmly controls distribution and use of cocaine money within the village. In contrast, Awastara lacks firm political guidance and is plagued by political factionalism. Each of the three residential sections of the community has its own headman and the four churches with congregations in the village compete with each other. Consequently, few community-wide decisions, projects, or controls can be obtained and Awastara is awash in social disarray.

In its detailed description of ordinary everyday sights, sounds, and behaviors, Awastara is a useful addition to the corpus of anthropological studies of the

Miskitu Coast. Students will find it very readable and engaging. Scholars will find helpful information up to a point, especially if they have some additional knowledge of the history and culture of the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coastal region. Thinking of Awastara from the perspective of my own study and experience of Miskitu culture, I am particularly struck by the sense of contrast between life in this coastal community not too far from the lower Rio Coco and that in a thoroughly riverine village several hundred miles upriver. Although Dennis does not specifically address this point, judging from a few scattered comments in his account, Awastara residents seem to view Rio Coco Miskitu as somewhat different from themselves, too. Judging from historical materials such Miskitu cultural regionalism has a considerable time depth. Thanks to Dennis's work we are now in a better position to pursue more comparative research among Miskitu communities that may reveal more diversity among Miskitu villages in eastern Nicaragua than is sometimes acknowledged by scholars.

Mary W. Helms

**Dilley, R. M.:** *Islamic and Caste Knowledge Practices among Haalpulaar'en in Senegal. Between Mosque and Termite Mound.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004. 270 pp. ISBN 0-7486-1990-9. (International African Library, 30) Price: £ 16.95

This anthropological book examines, from the historical perspective, the relationship between Islamic and "caste" knowledge (respectively symbolic "mosque" and "termite mound" of its title) among Haalpulaar'en of Senegal. The author attempts to embrace the period which begins back in the late eighteenth century and continues up to the time of his own fieldwork in Senegal in the 1980s and mid-1990s. His main concern constitute the Pulaar (Fulfulde) speakers of Fuuta Toro, inhabitants of the middle Senegal river valley in the northern part of the country known as Senegal's fertile crescent, a valley of agriculture and the nucleus of early Islamic political movements.

The book combines knowledge coming from secondary published historical works with the author's own data assembled during his "multi-sited" field research. It owes much to his earlier anthropological analyses of the craftsmen, and concentrates on an Islamic revolution in Fuuta Toro in the late eighteenth century. The main bulk of the book is comprised in eight chapters.

In chapter 1, entitled "The Mosque and the Termite Mound" (1–26), the reader is provided with some general information on the territory and the population discussed in the book. The concept of caste is understood among the Haalpulaar'en and other West African peoples somewhat different from what is known from ethnography of the Indian subcontinent. It refers to the members of the marginalised occupational groups of artisans, praise-singers, and musicians. Islam and caste structure are presented as two points of reference of social and cultural relationships in the changing milieu of the Senegal river valley. The author is inclined to

assume that the social exclusion of members of caste categories arises from the kinds of knowledge and power they control in the pursuit of their respective occupations.

The Pulaar-speakers of Fuuta Toro are divided in three social ranks (known also as "estates") and a large number of social categories. The relationships between the marginalised "caste" groups and the freeborn groups (mainly the Islamic clerics) in different times and according to different conceptions of Islam are thoroughly discussed in chapter 2: "Ranks and Categories: The Emergence of a Haalpulaar Social Division of Labour" (27–56). The author tries to show to what extent historic hierarchical prejudices influence the full membership of the local Muslim community. From among the freeborn rank groups (Fulɓe, fishermen, warriors, courtiers, counsellors, and Islamic clerics) special attentions is paid to the formation and functioning of the *toorobe* who emerged with the rise of the Islamic Almaamate ("rule of the imam") in the late eighteenth century, which overthrew the Fulɓe Deniyanke dynasty started by Koli Tengella. They claim Arab-Berber ancestry and dominate the offices of religious authority throughout Fuuta Toro. Craftsmen (leatherworkers, smiths, weavers, and woodcarvers), musicians and praise-singers, known as the men-of-skill, do not exceed 10% of the total population. They are labelled "caste" people and constitute occupational groups whose separation from one another is marked, among others, by endogamous marriage practices. The third rank included slaves, bondsmen, and women and amounted to 20% of the population. Ex-slaves are viewed today as occupying a degraded social position. According to Dilley's findings "relations between the three ranks . . . were, and still are to some extent, structured hierarchically with respect to access to land, political and religious offices, and to other economic resources in Fuuta Toro" (49). Islamic lore, knowledge, and power (*gandal diine*) was restricted to the *toorobe*, whereas slaves and caste groups controlled their own lore and knowledge known as occupational lore (*gandal golle*).

Chapter 3, "Historical Origins and Social Pedigrees of Craftsmen and Musicians: Genealogies of Power and Knowledge of the Wild" (57–88), deals with the men-of-skill and takes into account the social division of their knowledge and charismatic power. Both Arabic and European sources, as well as local oral genealogies are used in order to establish the origin and history of the "subaltern" groups which are considered as having contact and association with spiritual forces that emanate from the wild. Of all the men-of-skill pedigrees, weavers' lines of ancestry appear to have the longest history, reaching back over eighteen generations, which represents a historical span of around 500 years. It is evident that occupational specialisation by "castes" predates the Almaamate revolution of the 1770s, and Dilley is of the opinion that this regime changed little the terms of the social organisation of specialisation.

In chapter 4, "The White and the Black: Ideology and the Rise to Dominance of the Islamic Clerics" (89–113),