

Schlee, Günther, and Abdullahi A. Shongolo: *Islam and Ethnicity in Northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia*. Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012. 185 pp. ISBN 978-1-84701-046-9. Price: £ 40.00

Despite the very different sounding title, “Islam and Ethnicity in Northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia” is really a sequel to Günther Schlee’s earlier book, “Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya” (1989). In the earlier book Schlee investigated clan links between several of the pastoral peoples of northern Kenya, particularly the Rendille, Gabbra, Sakuye, Adjuran, and Garre. Drawing on a huge amount of ethnographic and historical evidence, Schlee argued that all these groups share a common ancestry in what he calls the Proto-Rendille-Somali (PRS) cultural complex. He showed how cultural traits in all these groups, including herd management practices, camel lineages, ritual activities, and even calendar systems, can be traced back to an earlier, shared cultural complex that is believed to have existed in the 16th century. The detailed analysis caused scholars to rethink the history of the area and the relations between the different peoples, many of which were at war with each other.

In the present work, Schlee seeks to further expand his analysis and to respond to his critics. Much of the material presented in “Islam and Ethnicity” is actually derived from his original habilitation thesis, written in 1985, but which has never been published or can only be found in obscure places and written in German. The style and method of enquiry is thus similar to the earlier book, consisting of painstakingly detailed comparisons of cultural elements amongst the different groups, combined with analysis of myths, oral history, and linguistic patterns.

After a brief introduction, chap. 1 tells the history of the peaceful relations between these people under the *Pax Borana* and how this peaceful period eventually ended. Chap. 2 addresses the non-PRS elements in northern Kenyan pastoralist culture and shows the cultural connections between these groups and other surrounding local groups, particularly the Boran Oromo and the Samburu. This chapter is a direct response to critics of the earlier work which argued that the focus on only PRS elements misrepresented the local cultures as many of them also shared non-PRS elements. In chap. 3 the issue of conversion to world religions is addressed and there is an interesting discussion of how Kenyan pastoralists viewed both Islam and Christianity. It is primarily individuals who are not actively engaged in pastoralism who choose to join a world religion, and most choose Islam. It is suggested that Islam appears more straightforward than Christianity, having no strange notions of trinity, salvation by Jesus, and so on, and that it is also perceived as being culturally closer, while Christianity appears associated with White Europeans and their strange ways. It is only the very poor, who became dependent on food and financial support from the Christian missionaries that adopted that faith.

Chap. 4 focusses more on development issues, particularly range management and the importance of open borders and mobility for the pastoralist lifestyle. Chap. 5 is a shortened form of an article written with Abdullahi

Shongolo, a local Boran scholar. It considers the interethnic conflict that erupted between pastoralist groups in southern Ethiopia in the period after the fall of the Derg government in Ethiopia in 1991, and the political consequences of the new ethnic classifications that came to the fore at this time, particularly the shifting boundaries between “Oromo” and “Somali” and the role that Islam played in these identities.

Overall, the book provides a huge amount of rich and detailed ethnographic data, which will be of great interest to scholars of the pastoralist peoples of northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia. Much of the material, although newly published, is based on research carried out in the 1980s, with only brief comments and updates attempting to bring it up to the present. Thus the style of much of the writing often appears rather dated, and indeed the “ethnographic present” of the book is some thirty years ago. Whilst there is much important data here, it is a shame that more up-to-date research has not been included. The book would also have benefitted from more analysis and the drawing out of more easily accessible summaries and conclusions. For the nonspecialist reader, the presentation of so much raw data will make quite difficult reading.

Nonetheless, this book is a welcome addition to Schlee’s many decades of research on the pastoralist peoples of northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia. His precise analysis of patterns of cultural traits, his piecing together of oral histories, and his phenomenal attention to detail allow a complex picture of intergroup relations and identities to emerge which questions earlier analyses of distinct ethnic groups and the continuing focus that this position has in contemporary politics in both Kenya and Ethiopia. Whilst not fashionable in contemporary social anthropology, understanding the patterns and complexes that exist amongst peoples living in a broad regional area is an interesting and worthwhile endeavour and this book takes Schlee’s scholarly contribution one step further.

Dena Freeman

Singh, Pashaura (ed.): *Sikhism in Global Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 281 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-807554-7. Price: \$ 55.00

“Sikhism in Global Context” ist die souverän edierte Publikation von bereits in 2008 vorgetragenen Referaten während des internationalen Sikh-Symposiums an der University of California, Riverside. Einleitend stellt Pashaura Singh die Thematik der Tagung vor (1–16), indem er kompetent und verständlich auf die Komplexität und Schwerpunkte der 12 Beiträge hinweist. Alle Autoren fokussieren ihrem Spezialgebiet entsprechend auf den deutlich feststellbaren Prozess der Identitätsfindung der Sikhs in Indien und vor allem der Immigranten in Kanada, den USA und England. Die vorzüglich und kritisch geschriebene Einleitung macht Appetit auf die Lektüre, ohne die einzelnen Beiträge vorwegzunehmen.

N. Gerald Barrier erforscht in “Sikhism in a Global Context” (17–38) das geschichtliche Erbe und die heutigen Herausforderungen der Sikhs. Vorzüglich versteht er die Problematik der Sikhs im Milieu der Punjab-Kultur