castes of the surrounding areas. Chapters 7 and 8 deal with two small population groups from the outskirts of the Kathmandu Valley that sociologically stand between the categories of caste and ethnic group. Chapters 10 and 11 investigate the intercaste cooperation and interdependence in relation to domestic and collective ceremonies and are based on examples from the town of Panauti. Chapters 12 and 13, previously unpublished, are based on recent fieldwork and focus on the process of identity construction in modern context.

The author chose to start with three cities (Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur), ancient capitals of the former Newar kingdoms (1620–1768/69, Malla dynasties) and still main urban nuclei of the Kathmandu valley. He introduces the historical context as an important frame for various issues concerning the contemporary Newar society such as social structure and hierarchy, religious practices and ethnic identity. Following the three territorial circles that constitute important points of reference, he deals first with the core of Newar society, the cities where intellectual, political, and artistic resources have always been chiefly located; then with the country, composed by farmers' villages which were formerly encompassed by one or another of these political centres; and finally with the outlying areas, the edges of the Kathmandu Valley, so far neglected by scholarship yet essential for the understanding of the whole system. By considering its periphery, this book introduces a new perspective on Newar society.

Another original aspect of this study is the special attention given to the farmers' castes both in urban (chapters 3 and 12) and rural (chapters 4, 5, 6) context. The farmers, a major group of the Newar society, are of primary importance for the understanding of its social structure and the interactions between different status groups. The comparison between these two types of farmers' societies points out some main common features such as kinship and marriage, the cult of a tutelary deity linked to a particular territory, and the membership in a particular type of associations (*guthi*). The principles of "blood" and of "territory" (chapter 6) in association with the formation of modern ethnic and national identities are well-known common features in several Himalayan societies. The Newar case is of special interest because it links territory with death. The affiliation of a person to a given territorial unit depends explicitly on his membership to a specific funeral society. This type of association (*guthi*) is a distinctive characteristic of the Newar society. Different types of associations (chapter 9) regulate several aspects of Newar social and religious life, and even possess economic functions in some limited cases. They are usually dissociated from kinship units, even if some of them are still anchored in kin groups. They are vital for the status of an individual and reinforce in many ways social relations within the community.

All together, the studies presented in this book show the fundamental unity of Newar civilisation. Gérard Toffin rightly argues that the anthropology of the Newar cannot be divided into a rural anthropology and an urban anthropology. His approach is based on the analyses of the interactions between the centre and the periphery, the general and the particular. His wide and well-constructed applications of comparative methods lead us to perceive a dynamic, fluid, and situationally constructed society. When read as a whole, the chapters of this book present an overall picture of some of the essential features of Newar society. Lubomira Palikarska

West, Harry G.: Ethnographic Sorcery. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007. 132 pp. ISBN 978-0-226-89398-3. Price: $ 14.00

The author asserts: "This volume tells the story of a dawning perception that all that happens has happened before – that the ethnographer, like those he dreams, is himself susceptible to being dreamt" (xi). Unfortunately, this is not the only unclear statement in this brief volume. The author considers the problem of how he, an American social anthropologist, can understand and describe the beliefs of an alien culture, in this case, the Mueda of Mozambique. He earlier published a more conventional ethnography of these people. A repeated concern in his writings has been the persistence of African beliefs about witchcraft, sorcery, and magic, despite the influences of modern economic, political, and educational forces. The title of the present book derives from his argument that "sorcery and ethnography are in many ways one" (81). He reaches this odd conclusion through some questionable reasoning.

One reason is that because human explanations are based partly on metaphor and that beliefs in witchcraft are grounded in metaphor and symbols, and because such beliefs also help explain the conflicts and tribulations of social life, they are similar to anthropological models and explanations of society which also are grounded in metaphorical thinking. To him both these systems of explanation are equally persuasive. Of course, human thought also involves more than metaphors; it involves metonymy and other tropes as well as rationality. Our understanding can be based on critical investigation and rationality. It is true that thoughtful anthropologists, sociologists, and historians can recognize that different systems of thought work for different societies. This does not, however, mean that traditional ideas will continue to work as situations change due to contact with other cultures, new technology and the advent of calamities. There is no good reason then to see all sets of beliefs and values as equally valid either morally or substantively. One of the great achievements of Weberian sociology is its struggle to deal with the ways that some earlier forms of thought and values cannot effectively cope with modernity in its economic, scientific, or organizational aspects. It is, of course, true that modernity has also brought its own new and destructive forms of anti-rationalism, supernaturalism, confused cultural borrowing, and violence but such dangerous forms of thinking and behavior have not provided morally acceptable or long-term useful ways of helping humans to exist with satisfaction.

West points out that the Mueda anti-sorcerers "gained ascendancy over chaos in their world by modeling order for all to hear – by orally conceiving *of*, and thus *conceiving*, a new world. Their *words* constituted the *enactment* of their 'sorcery of construction.' By declaring that they knew what sorcerers 'were up to,' these beneficent authorities disarmed them" (57). Word magic admittedly has a seductive, narcotic effect, but it ultimately does not solve social issues. Yet for West, such beliefs in the supernatural and its embodiment in words and ritual take on a reality that for me seems at odds with more realistic explanations. West's argument is murky: "Sorcery's reality lay neither in a mask that might be removed nor, somehow, behind a mask – neither 'onstage' nor 'offstage' – but rather was instantiated through its masking(s). In the moment of performative representation, the realities of the performance and the performed coexisted within one another" (54).

West's cultural relativism may at first appear attractive, liberal, and tolerant, but it does not promote any useful analytical program for explaining how societies work or how one may cope effectively with social issues. West observes that among the Mueda "everyone contributed to sorcery discourse" (60), and, of course, that would be true to the extent that all Mueda share common beliefs and values, but all members of society do not think and act alike or contribute equally. Some even dissent openly or covertly. Some even subvert. Those who have worked with, lived with, or studied societies, where many people believe in sorcery, witchcraft, and magic, know that such beliefs provide quite varied explanations for misfortune and suffering and that manipulation of such beliefs and fears by some may serve as means for social control of others and also as sources of conflict and disagreement. Such beliefs are also harmful because they distract believers from any new and more realistic ways of dealing with illness, suffering, and the disruptions due to changing social conditions. Above all, beliefs that suffering is caused by supernatural powers lodged in fellow human beings create a social world that is caught in a web of circular and uncritical thinking and distrust often leading to persecution and violence. Extensive reading about the rise and fall in popular beliefs about witchcraft and sorcery in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe and America would provide a useful antidote to West's positive ways of thinking about such ideas and practices. In any case, such ideas about the supernatural are not truly comparable to social anthropological ethnography, whatever the flaws of anthropological thinking. Beliefs about the supernatural are not readily amenable to criticism, revision, and rejection in the ways that scientific thought (and even social scientific thinking) may be. Scientific thinking, however flawed, works better because of constant questioning and revision.

West's book is representative of some contemporary anthropological writing that questions the validity of ethnography itself. West's work appears to reflect a generosity and tolerance for multiple explanations of the world and experience, but it implicitly undermines the values of social science when it questions the hegemony of a social scientific approach to explanation. It reflects a contemporary lack of moral and methodological nerve and lack of fixed purpose. It also embodies a current popular fondness for personal testimonial, a trend in which anthropologists seem to feel that their confession of their intimate personal feelings, suffering, and doubts contributes to a reader's understanding of an ethnography. To be fair, West appears to be an appealing, pleasant, kindly, and thoughtful person intent on doing good and helping others. He especially wants his readers to like, understand, and respect the Mueda anti-sorcerer (whose photograph appears on the book's cover) who taught him and treated him for his own supposed afflictions from sorcery. West does not want readers to think he underrates how Mueda think and act, even though at times what Mueda do does not seem likely to solve their problems. West's highly personalized account cannot replace more sustained, critical, distanced, and extensive anthropological or sociological descriptions of events, ideas, and social organization. I finished this book knowing relatively little about Mueda culture and society and more than I wanted to know about the author. I learned nothing new about the key problems in understanding sorcery, witchcraft, and magic as sociocultural phenomena or how the Mueda material fits into the broad and vast published literature on these issues. On the back cover of this volume two anthropologists provide rave comments about it, but I think this is a book more likely to confuse than help students. Finally, at the risk of sounding "nit-picking" I suggest that West learn the difference between the words "disinterested" and "uninterested." T. O. Beidelman

Wolff, Larry, and **Marco Cipolloni** (eds.): The Anthropology of the Enlightenment. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007. 414 pp. ISBN 978-0-8047-5203-9. Price: $ 29.95

Die Handbücher der akademischen Anthropologie lassen ihre Geschichte bezeichnenderweise mit dem 19. Jh. anfangen. Das von Larry Wolff und Marco Cipolloni herausgegebene Buch "The Anthropology of the Enlightenment" betont die Wichtigkeit der europäischen Aufklärung des 18. Jhs. für die (Kultur-)Anthropologie (Ethnologie) und sieht ihre Wurzeln im Zeitalter der Revolution ("Age of Revolution"). Die 16 Autoren vertreten eine nicht ganz selbstverständliche These, nämlich die "von der Anthropologie vor der Anthropologie" (J.-P. E. Belleau), sodass viele der späteren wichtigen anthropologischen Ideen in Bezug auf die Geschichte, Kultur und Gesellschaft schon in der Aufklärung – als einer Art von Protoanthropologie – zu finden sind. Für die Autoren ist es klar, dass die intellektuellen Prinzipien und Projekte der "Anthropologie" schon am Ende des 18. Jhs. umfassend artikuliert und erarbeitet wurden (L. Wolff). Ein Verdienst der frühen Anthropologen sehen sie auch darin, dass sie die Reisedokumente und Aufzeichnungen der Händler, Soldaten und Missionare gesammelt, revidiert, übersetzt und publiziert haben.