Chapter 2 reviews trees and their taxonomy. The people of Muyuw generally differentiate trees into species recognizable to botanists, but do not form higher level taxonomic classes; although they do group species using particular criteria such as trees with red sap (mostly Myristicaceae), trees with visible aerial roots (mostly *Ficus* spp.), or trees with common technical properties (useful for firewood, adze handles or outrigger crossbeams).

Chapter 3 is dedicated to gardens and the properties of associated trees. It explains how gardens are cleared, leaving plots of uncut trees (*tasim*) standing above the garden, like islands above the sea. Gardens are also likened to boats, that move around the landscape, avoiding islands and reefs (the uncut areas). *Tasim* keep the soil cooler and moister, they serve as seed sources for older class fallows that provide house timbers but more importantly timber for boats (notably *Calophyllum*).

Another notable aspect of gardening is fire. The Muyuw fire or smoke practically everything: outrigger floats, postpartum mothers, the bases of sago palms, and keep the meadows associated with sago orchards open by regular burning. The peculiar soils of these meadows might result from their nutrients leaching into neighboring sago orchards. The region's overall fire-defined landscape stands in contrast to Asian systems that mold land with water.

Chapter 4 focuses on the genus *Calophyllum*, several species of which are central to outrigger canoes. For example, the highly stressed ladle shaped mast support is usually made of *C. inophyllum*, the species with the most highly interlocked grain, whose leaves also provide models for the top and bottom curves of the sail. Most *anageg* keels and strakes are carved from *C. leleanii*, whose timber has less highly interlocked grain. *C. goniocarpum* is sought out for masts and punting poles because of their straight non-interlocked grain; a critical issue in how the mast vibrates.

Anageg are produced on islands where the best trees for masts are not available. When these canoes are first brought to Muyuw, their original "inferior" mast and spars are replaced by timber from "superior" trees found in the Sulog region (south-central Muyuw). This is also the source for the pandanus leaves used for making sails. The Sulog region, characterized by an extremely long fallow regime, is not thought of as a gardening region but rather as a resource base for canoe materials.

Chapter 5 looks at *vatul*, a generic term for vines as life forms, but also "a principle of connection and a vehicle of thought" (291). The author discusses vines, knots, bindings of sails, fishing nets, and string figures. The Muyuw world is indeed viewed as if it is composed of vines (*vatul*): "from vines in forests to veins in the body, between these two poles everything is conceived and made" (291).

In the sixth conclusive chapter, the reader sees how trees, timber, knots, and vines come together in their quintessential object: the *anageg*, "an exhibition of the art of knowing" (296). Indeed, when these canoes, built on Gawa or Kweywata islands, are delivered to Muyuw, they are systematically refitted conforming to Muyuw ideology and practices.

A masterpiece of engineering is notoriously difficult to write about, even more so when conceived and built by "visual and tactile people" (xi). The author has succeeded well in giving the reader insight into the emic perspective of Muyuw canoes in all their social and ecological complexity. Herein lies the originality of this innovative and important work. Anne Di Piazza

Eichberg, Henning: Questioning Play. What Play Can Tell Us about Social Life. London: Routledge. 2016, 275 pp. ISBN 978-1-138-68247-4. Price: £ 24.49

Hamayon, Roberte: Why We Play. An Anthropological Study. Chicago: Hau Books. 2016, 343 pp. ISBN 978-0-9861325-6-8. Price: $ 35.00

In an email, which Henning Eichberg sent to me two months before he passed away in April 2017, he replied to my email, in which I had told him that I plan to write this joint book review, with these lines: "Roberte Hamayon has been already attracting my attention too. Important! When I look at the short book description now, I however also see possible differences (which always make everything interesting though): 'pure' activity? 'consistent and coherent'? 'unique modality' of action? I presumably view play more in its internal contradictions." Whether he got around to reading Hamayon's book, I do not know, but if he did, I am sure he would have realized that the differences are not as big as they seemed to him at first, as the two books under review here have, in fact, much in common. In what will most likely be his last publication, a joint book review submitted to the journal *Stadion* of Alexey Kylasov's book "Ethnosport. The End of Decline" (Vienna 2015) and my PhD dissertation "Wrestling, Archery, and Horse Racing in Buryatia. Traditional Sports Competitions and Social Change" (Fairbanks 2015), he asks his readers and himself: "When questioning into the energy of play, games, dances, and festivities, the shamanic dimension appears as significant …, but indeed, we lack intellectual instruments for a deeper analysis of the shamanic connection. … Across cultures, the connection of shamanism with martial arts, especially with wrestling, is conspicuous – why this? And shamanist practice is work on human energy – how this?" In Roberte Hamayon's book he had (or could have) found such "intellectual instruments" and answers to his questions. So let us turn to her book first.

The book of the leading French anthropologist has two parts. In the shorter first one she lays out her approach, provides an overview of the – irritatingly insufficient – anthropological study of play so far, outlines the historically rather depreciating Western/Christian attitudes towards play, introduces the definition of play which serves her as basis for her analyses, and familiarizes the reader with the empirical data those rest upon. The second much longer part she devotes to the multiple dimensions of play: the bodily, cognitive, interacting, dramatizing, psychic, virile, political, and more. The book is written in a conversational style, rhythmically asking questions and providing answers, leading very logically from one chapter to the next, and is thus, despite its epistemological complexity,

deriving from the multifariousness of the matter in question, a good read.

Hamayon criticizes the anthropologists of the 20th century in regard to the study of play for that they practically did not study it at all, because they, as she writes, had focused, if at all, almost only on sports and rituals, but not on play. More generally, she criticizes them for that they, while claiming that their discipline is the most holistic of the human sciences, practically in unison rejected to undertake generalizing studies. Regarding play, she detects, such were only accomplished by scholars from other disciplines: the historian Johan Huizinga and the writer and sociologist Roger Caillois. Ironically, in their specialized studies undertaken, as they argue, for the sake of precision, anthropologists have extensively quoted them. Hamayon, however, set out for a generalizing study, because to her, "if precision calls for specialized studies, it seems that each of these always stumbles over difficulties that demand yet another specialized study."

Hamayon's decades-long research led her to the conclusion that a unique principle is underlying all human playing, which, however, appears in multiple expressions. For her, this principle is best defined by Gregory Bateson's exploration that play constitutes an activity which is framed by meta-communication, in which the players, before they start playing, in one way or another state, "This is play", meaning that "these actions in which we now engage do not denote what *those actions for which they stand* would denote" in normal life (Bateson, Steps to an Ecology of Mind. San Francisco 1972). The main data, upon which Hamayon rests her study, are historical records of the Roman gladiatorial games and reports and her own observations of the shamanic ritual plays for hunting success of the Buryats – a Mongolian language ethnic group in southern Siberia numbering about 450,000 – and the wrestling matches and dances which accompany them.

What the Roman and Buryats' playing activities have in common is that both aim at an effect outside the playframe. The Romans were playing their games, and the Buryats still play them today, for giving pleasure to "invisible beings" or "immaterial entities," in order to maintain or regain their support. For the Romans it was their Gods who bestowed on them fertility and prosperity, for the Buryat pastoralists are their ancestral spirits doing this, and for the Buryats whose survival depends on hunting success – which it formerly did for all of them – are the animals' spirits those to whom they direct their playing activities. For the latter purpose, they, when wrestling and dancing, imitate the hunted animals' behaviors. These sport games and dances have, however, only the supplementary function of distracting the spirits from the play, which the group's shaman performs simultaneously. In what is both a fictional play and a ritual, he also imitates the hunted animals, but for directly attracting and finally marrying a female animal spirit, in order to receive a loving gift from her, which consists of game, i.e., quarry for the hunters of his group. In exchange for this gift – killed animals in fact – he needs to offer the spirits human lives or at least human vital energy, which he does by offering himself, which he enacts by falling and laying himself down motionless, thus fictionally dies. The attending group members, however, "wake him up" in time, so that not too much "vital human energy" is taken by the spirits, i.e., not too many of the group members would die, or die too early, or become ill. Thus, the whole action is, in fact, for tricking the spirits. This is why their distraction by the wrestlers and dancers is crucial and why the shaman has to play his part well and every time differently, as otherwise the spirits would not let get themselves fooled again.

From the analysis of these ritual plays of the Buryats (and of other synonymous activities of them and other Siberian ethnic groups, as well as from supportive data from elsewhere) Hamayon draws a number of conclusions. The four most important for me are the following. First, play is, in contradiction to what Huizinga, Caillois, and many others had believed, not principally a voluntary activity. The Buryat shaman *must* perform his play and his group members *must* attend it and *must* dance and wrestle. Otherwise – and this unfolds the second important conclusion which Hamayon draws – the intended effect, which is hunting success, could not be achieved. Thus, in this case – and in that of the Roman gladiatorial games too – play aims at an effect in the "empirical reality," a possibility which Huizinga and Caillois had denied by definition and were followed in this also by many others. Thirdly, as explained above, in order to achieve the desired effect, all players – shamans, wrestlers, and dancers alike – must "customize" their actions, and this each time anew. Therefore, all these actions "always involve a margin of freedom with regard to the way they are enacted." It is this margin or latitude of action, that "each time, it may and must be neither exactly the same, nor exactly another," which provides an "ideal place for individual agency" – a feature and quality central in and for play in general, as Hamayon rightfully argues. Of this latitude of action – and this is the fourth of her conclusions, which I want to highlight – the players make use of by metaphorical bodily expressions. Thus, play is a metaphorical activity – an insight, which Bateson's definition of play echoes too, and a fact, which grounds in the core of "our thought process," as this is by necessity predominantly characterized by "metaphorical structuring," that is, as Hamayon explains by using a quote of linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson, by "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing or experience, in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors We Live By. Chicago 1980). In her own words, "resorting to something tangible or well known" – in the case of the Buryat ritual plays, the animals imitating movements – "is what allows us to think something that is not so" – herein the realm of the animal spirits – "and possibly to manipulate it" – herein to make the spirits giving the people enough game for survival. Put in a nutshell, for Hamayon the *margin of action*, the *metaphorical character* of the latter, and bodily and/or mental *movement* make up together what play is: a "*mode of action,*" as she calls it.

Although not yet knowing her detailed study on this matter, Henning Eichberg's short elaboration on shamanic practices in his book reviewed here reads as an affirmation

of these conclusions. He writes: "Practicing shamanism has a bodily and often playful character. … The shaman is the artist of the tribe and often ornaments his or her body in an eccentric and playful way. This combines the ritualistic – the repetition of certain traditions – with the creative. The spiritual healers are free to do superfluous and creative things, and they are expected to do so. They may take themselves un-seriously, play the fool and display themselves in a crazy and eccentric style. This eccentricity is accepted, even welcomed, because it contributes to the well-being of the whole clan or tribe."

The book of the late German-Danish cultural sociologist and philosopher consists of ten revised articles of him, which, although meaningfully ordered and rounded up with a conclusion, can be read criss-cross. Eichberg touches a plethora of playing activities from all over the world and throughout human history, however focuses on such, to which other play researchers often did not pay much attention: the movement in the labyrinth, the playing of the elderly, various folk games, and also risk games, war games, bullying, other forms of "dark play," and many more. This rich empirical material, which Eichberg well manages to present very entertainingly where adequate, but in unvarnished explicitness where necessary, serves him as database for – see the title of his book – questioning play; and he questions both phenomena in play or games and approaches in the study of them.

By pointing to the "dark" forms of play, Eichberg warns against the idealization of play as an activity purely "regarded as a matter of pleasure, friendly leisure, and free fun, as creative and harmless" – a widespread view, especially among "educational philosophers." By bringing to our attention such activities like battle simulating sand table games, risk games like metro surfing, the torture of animals by children for curiosity, bull- and cockfights, and others, Eichberg makes clear that "[p]lay is not just harmless" and not always "joyful for all participants." He also points to the negative developments and obliquities in professional sports – spreading anorexia, doping, match fixing, etc. – and deconstructs these sports, based on historical data, as phenomena of the process of social alienation in the capitalist world.

Nonetheless, Eichberg assures us, "[w]hile Adorno's saying that 'there is no good life in bad life' did fit in some way, indeed, it does not fit for play. There is play in bad life." His book contains an "Index of play and games" listing the more than 400 playful activities he mentions in the texts, of which the vast majority is not "dark." Play, states Eichberg, "is an island in the world of alienation and acceleration," as it is "aproductive," i.e., "outside the categories of productive and unproductive," and its "repetitive patterns … contrast the hegemonic principle of acceleration." Games are convivial activities, and in fun and folk games often the perfectionism and overregulation, which are bearing down on people in their daily lives, are suspended by staging grotesque movements, the non-perfect body, and paying not much attention to rules but instead to that that all players have fun. Folk games also often affirm local, regional, or ethnic identities. They can, however, lose this quality – and the players the control of "their" games – when they become sportified and subordinated to regulatory bodies.

The latter example reveals, in fact, two ubiquitous characteristics of play and games: their historicity and their contradictoriness. For this reason, Eichberg urges to radically change the epistemology of play. Throughout his book, in which, as stated, he fields hundreds of playing activities, he argues that an activity, which appears in such wide multifariousness, and which is such a multidimensional, ambiguous, culturally relative, historically changing, and contradictory phenomenon cannot be defined. Regardless of how one has tried to define it, whether as an as-if activity, as one, which is process- and not result-orientated, as something we do for fun, as a form of meta-communication, as the overcoming of unnecessary obstacles, or otherwise, counterexamples can easily be found. Thus, for Eichberg defining play is meaningless and, moreover, even counterproductive, as de*fini*nitions, as I would condense his argument, *fini*tes reasoning beyond the limits set up by them. What instead of definitions and the equally useless classifications, which both are products of the Western, universalistic, and positivistic scientific tradition, is needed for the *understanding* of such fluid phenomena, which play and games constitute, argues Eichberg, is a "*differential phenomenology*" and a "*praxeology*." By describing in all details a plethora of playing activities, and case-specifically analyzing them with multiple approaches, thus *questioning* them from all sides, he vividly demonstrates in his book what he means by this. And yet, many questions remain open, but that only echoes the *in*finite opportunities, which the "*mode of action*," that play is, provide, and the unquantifiable reasons *why we play*. Hence, to answer the question with which Hamayon closes up her book – "So then, are we done with playing?" – No, certainly not. Play, being a "basic human activity," as Eichberg expounds, will never end, and both books reviewed here provide insight and inspiration for further questioning it.

Stefan Krist

Elliott, Denielle, and **Dara Culhane** (eds.): A Different Kind of Ethnography. Imaginative Practices and Creative Methodologies. North York: University of Toronto Press, 2017. 147 pp. ISBN 978-1-4426-3661-3. Price: $ 27.95

"A Different Kind of Ethnography. Imaginative Practices and Imaginative Methodologies" is a collaborative book project edited by Denielle Elliott and Dara Culhane. Both are curators at the Center for Imaginative Ethnography (CIE). The CIE is a collective of activists, artists, anthropologists, and other creative practitioners who experiment with the edge effects of ethnographic and other creative practices that move beyond the observational and analytical paradigm. It offers "a space for exploring emergent ethnographic methodologies" that stress co-creation and affective, emplaced, and polysensory scholarship (3), the key focus of this collection. Its six chapters are written by the five co-curators of the Centre for Imaginative Ethnography, who are based in Canada and Italy. The CIE