

zur Entstehung der Santería und in Brasilien des Candomblé führte. In dieser Offenheit sieht Otero gerade ein integratives Moment für Menschen dies- und jenseits des Atlantik. Die katholischen Übernahmen – in Lagos wird bis heute der aus Bahia mitgebrachte Karneval gefeiert – unterscheidet die Aguda von den “Saro”, wie die von den Briten aus den Sklavenhandelsschiffen befreiten und in Sierra Leone angesiedelten Sklaven heißen, die viktorianisch-britische Kultureinflüsse aufnahmen. Otero spricht zudem von der großen Bedeutung des Ifa-Orakelkultes als verbindendes Element von westafrikanischen Yoruba und Rückkehrern, doch untermauert sie diese Annahme nicht.

Das vierte Kapitel “Situating Lagosian, Caribbean, and Latin American Diasporas” beginnt mit einem Theoriekurs über Erinnerung und Geschichte, der auf Ricoeur und Aristoteles rekurriert. In den Blickpunkt geraten dann ein Sklavennachkomme und sein Schicksal, das ihn von Havanna in die Stadt seines Vaters zurückführte. Seine Biografie bindet die Einzelkapitel gewissermaßen zusammen. Der eigentliche Entdecker ist jedoch der kubanische Diplomat und Historiker Rodolfo Sarracino, der schon in den 1980er Jahren über den Rückkehrer Hilario Campos berichtete. Er war ein freier Afrokubaner, der in Havanna als Sohn eines Yoruba-Sklaven aus Lagos zur Welt kam, wohin er gegen Ende des 19. Jh.s mit zwei Schwestern zurückkehrte. Seiner Grabstätte, von der es Fotos in Oteros Buch gibt, lassen sich Geburts- (1878) und Todesjahr (1941) entnehmen, doch kann die Autorin die Rückkehr trotz Feldforschung und Interviews mit zwei Enkelinnen nicht datieren. Fest steht, dass Hilario Campos am Campos Square in Lagos die *Cuban Lodge* errichtete, deren kubanische Vorbilder nicht zu leugnen sind. Ob ihr Erbauer, wie Sarracino meint, Freimaurer war, oder wie Otero annimmt, ein in Kuba eingeweihter *babalawo*, d. h. Priester des Ifa-Orakels der traditionellen Yoruba-Religion, lässt sich kaum abschließend beantworten. Dies aber ist eine vielschichtige Angelegenheit angesichts der bis heute in Kuba kursierenden Gerüchte, dass einige der ersten in Kuba anzutreffenden “afrikanischen” Babalawos, also noch in Afrika geborene und eingeweihte Orakelpriester, Einweihungen von *criollos* ablehnten, also in Kuba geborenen Personen, die ab ca. 1880 dann aber doch stattfanden. Die Enkelinnen von Hilario Campos konnten zur Klärung des Falles ihres Großvaters nichts beitragen und erinnern sich bestenfalls an die Dominanz des Spanischen in der *Cuban Lodge* ihrer Kindertage. Die anspruchsvollere Arbeitsethik der Rückkehrer ist zudem im Gedächtnis geblieben.

Das Fünfte Kapitel “Creating AfroCubanos. Public Cultures in a Circum-Atlantic Perspective” blickt zurück nach Kuba auf die komplexe soziale und geistesgeschichtliche Dynamik, welche die Afrokubaner als soziale, politische, kulturelle und religiöse Kategorie hervorbrachte und im kubanischen Nationalverständnis verankerte. Ein nationaler Überblick über eine verfolgte “schwarze Partei” und die Rassenfrage in der Frühzeit des unabhängigen Kuba, die Arbeiten des Nestors der Afrokubaforschung Fernando Ortiz, die Biografie des *cimarrón* (flüchtiger Sklave) Esteban Montejo eines Miguel Barnet sind nur einige der vielfältigen Beiträge, die den Afro-

kubaner, nach Auffassung von Otero, mit Verweisen auf Westafrika und Kuba ideengeschichtlich kreierten. Hier geht es nun nicht mehr nur um Yoruba, sondern auch um andere afrikanische Gruppen, die unter den Sklaven Kubas zu finden waren. In diesem Kapitel verweist die Autorin darauf, dass die Kunst und Literatur Kubas einen großen Beitrag zu den entstehenden Vorstellungen über den Afrokubaner geleistet haben. Hier zeigt sie sich als Vertreterin der “folklore studies”.

Das Feldforschungsideal ihres Faches verleitet Ethnologen oft zu übertriebener Strenge, wenn sie sich zum empirischen Schaffen der Nachbarfächer äußern. Im vorliegenden Fall mag dies jedoch berechtigt sein, da die Autorin des Buches Ethnologie studierte, bevor sie sich den “folklore studies” zuwandte. Viele ihrer Aussagen sind eher oberflächlich belegt, der Umgang mit den Quellen ist bisweilen undurchsichtig, und die zum Verständnis wichtigen Kategorien und Begriffe werden verkürzt oder zu spät erklärt. Vor allem aber findet sich eine Anzahl von Argumentationslinien, die in diskursiven Nebeln die Bodenhaftung zu verlieren drohen und innere Widersprüche überspielen.

Das Buch enthält viele gute und aktuelle Ideen, die aber empirisch und argumentativ nicht immer angemessen ausgeführt wurden. Die Geschichte und Gegenwart der transatlantischen Welt sind ohne Zweifel dynamisch, unübersichtlich und verworren. Nur: Muss es die wissenschaftliche Darstellung auch sein?

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**Paris, Peter J.** (ed.): Religion and Poverty. Pan-African Perspectives. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009. 384 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-4378-3. Price: \$ 26.95

Poverty is a social phenomenon with conceptual, definitional vagueness. Attempts at understanding its causes, nature, implications and the measuring indices are often riddled with contradictions. In Africa and the African diaspora, poverty measurement was pioneered by economists and development experts, with a priori poverty indexes around individualistic, structural, and fatalistic explanations. The concepts employed in their analysis are usually very “thin,” often ideologically-driven, and focusing on material deprivation and measurable elements including inadequate income and employment, food insecurity, poor nutrition, consumption by households, social inequality and exclusion, inability to keep pace with modernization. This provides some insight into the interaction among various facets of poverty that in turn makes poverty a dynamic, intractable process.

The enigmatic nature of poverty requires systematic cross-cultural research, a multidisciplinary approach, and a conceptual framework of varied perceptions and understandings of poverty and the design of poverty-alleviation strategies. The import of contrasting etiologies and statuses of poverty across geo-cultures cannot be overemphasised. The value of a multidisciplinary approach in interrogating the profile of poverty (who the poor are), its causes (why they are poor), and the implications for policy and practice (what can be done to reduce poverty)

can no longer be undermined. Such an approach reveals a more complex, multilayered trajectory of poverty. An analysis of causes of poverty is more robust if it is informed by poor people's own perceptions of who the poor are, and hence what poverty is, or the poor's own vision of the dynamics of poverty and the processes leading to impoverishment or prosperity.

"Religion and Poverty. Pan-African Perspectives" critically explores the interconnectedness between religion and poverty in Africa and the African diaspora.

The collection of essays based on a series of seminars, lectures, and conferences, was quite novel in seeking to present a distinctively Pan-African approach to the complex global discourse on poverty. More interestingly, the essays problematise the intersection of religion and poverty in the lived experiences and expressions of Africans on both sides of the Atlantic. Beginning with a foreword and introduction, it is structured under five main parts: dealing with the roots and impact of poverty; challenges of the global and informal economies; religious strategies for liberating the poor; the ambiguous relation of religion and poverty; and the practical theories for combating poverty.

Against the backdrop that religious institutions, beliefs, and praxis can contribute to and exacerbate poverty, the book examines the ambivalent character of religion in inducing or facilitating poverty on the one hand, just as it plays a significant role in empowerment and poverty reduction. Relying on a multidisciplinary focus, African indigenous spiritualities provide a useful conceptual, analytical framework for constructing a Pan-African approach to poverty and its amelioration. Through the multiple lenses of respective academic disciplines and embracing a Pan-African consciousness, the contributors attempted to "develop a common moral discourse by studying religion and poverty" (4). Though, most contributors were theologians in orientation, they attempted to provide a rich overview relying on phenomenological, sociological meanings and religious ethnographies. In this way, they espoused the existential meanings of poverty, locating it within the purview of socioreligious and cultural realities of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial Africa. The political economy of African states and how they are responding to globalisation becomes pertinent too.

In addressing the historical causes of poverty, the colonial enterprise on the heels of the obnoxious trade in humans, was aptly critiqued for inventing and truncating development in Africa in the light of capitalist exploitation and expropriation; devaluing skills and generating artificial economies to service the métropole; and berating missionary Christianity for collusion in the colonial enterprise. As Jacob Olupona indicated in the "Foreword," "Given the complex historical experiences ..., the conversation on poverty calls for a radical rethinking of African philosophical, social, and ethical norms to understand how modernization, secular democratic ideals, and political transformation of the continent since independence, have impinged upon the norms, cultures, and indigenous African life today" (xiv). Several chapters demonstrate that studying poverty in Africa and its diaspora commu-

nities requires the poor's own description and understanding of their conditions and state of being. This provides an added value to the book, illuminating some Pan-African attitudes to poverty and drawing indigenous religious resources and cultural epistemologies to alleviating it. Thus, the book provides new, fresh insights in understanding the causes, courses of poverty, and poverty alleviation strategies in Africa and the African diaspora, beyond popular explanations provided by external stakeholders.

However, the book cannot be said to be exhaustive and representative of Africa and the African diaspora with contributions only from South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Kenya, Tanzania, Jamaica, Canada, and the United States. The regional focus is by far Anglo-centred. Perspectives from Francophone and Lusophone Africa would have provided a wider outlook. The African diasporic context is diverse in history and experience, its breadth transcends North America and the Caribbean, to include diaspora communities in Europe, South America, the Arab world, the Indian continent, and the former Soviet bloc. Even views expressed about these different countries are hardly homogenous. This says something about the commonalities and complex diversities that characterise Africa and the African diaspora. In that sense, the book proves too ambitious. While the essays focused on indigenous religions and Christianity, the African Islam perspective, which is part of the "triple religious heritage" in Africa and the African diaspora, was neglected. There was a tendency to criticize Pentecostal forms of Christianity and the "prosperity gospel" for not contributing to the alleviation of poverty. There is, in my view, a generalisation. Not all Pentecostal groups subscribe to the prosperity teaching. But even when they do, the meaning and emphasis given to it vary. In the imagination of several African Pentecostal churches, prosperity teaching is both like and unlike that envisioned by American prosperity preachers. Prosperity gospel is not simply about wealth accumulation or "becoming rich," but more centrally about total well-being in which good health and wealth are indicators. They do not only work to combat spiritual poverty but also material, physical, epistemological poverty.

Critics of the prosperity gospel often homogenise African Pentecostalism and fail to understand how some engage the public sphere, becoming socially mobile and civically relevant in Africa and the African diaspora. Masenya's essay was an exception. She explored how Pentecostal women in Botswana reinterpreted the Bible, and through the "Bosadi" womanhood approach empowered themselves in their life situations (152–165). Scholars should not simply be interested in the mechanisms for measuring whether religious groups perpetuate poverty and or work towards it alleviation. More importantly, we should interrogate how religious groups engage in discourses about poverty, how they define it, what forms and shape poverty takes, what worldview informs such perceptions. An official definition of poverty may not be understood in the same sense by the membership.

The book is a vital contribution to the wider discourse on poverty in Africa and the African diaspora. The Af-

rican religious/cultural insights provide an interesting spin that social scientists, development experts, and other stakeholders interested in the perceptions of the causes of poverty and all those working towards poverty alleviation must read.

Afe Adogame

**Pedersen, Morten Axel:** Not Quite Shamans. Spirit Worlds and Political Lives in Northern Mongolia. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011. 250 pp. ISBN 978-0-8014-7620-4. Price: \$ 28.95

This pioneering ethnography documents the lives of Darhad Mongols in the far North of Mongolia during a particularly difficult period in the transition to a monopoly market economy at the turn of the century. The book has many linked themes revolving around what the author describes as “shamanic politics” (chap. 1). By this he describes the capacity of Darhad Mongols to develop ways of being possessed by and managing the multiple identities needed to navigate the ever shifting political and ecological context of post-socialist Mongolia. This ethnography is beautifully written and features haunting portraits of individuals trapped by their circumstances. The most powerful image, which frames the study, is the condition of *agsan* which refers to the violent possession of an individual (usually a drunk male), who temporarily loses his soul, becomes only part-human, and, therefore, is no longer responsible for his actions. Pedersen links this prevalent condition to the dilemma that certain individuals face on becoming “fake” or “partial” shamans. He styles this as a uniquely postsocialist dilemma where the violent state repressions of the late 1930s left a vacuum of enskillment such that individuals who are open to possession by spirits lack the tools they need to control them. The strongest parts of the book are the portraits of specific individuals such as the shunned blacksmith Gombodorj who struggles with his visions and shamanic heritage; or the “genuine shaman” Nadmid Udgan who practices on the fringe of power struggles between politicians. Perhaps the most striking part of the ethnography is the seamless way that Pedersen links traditional animist concepts of landscape masters to the capricious and shifting forces of the new economy represented by *ninja* gold-miners and international NGOs. The book is firmly located in a growing set of ethnographies which argue that forms of local knowledge and intuition can often offer as much or more insight into the darkness of system transition than the staid theories of social science.

Pedersen encourages to understand the daily management of these occult practices not as a socially constructed worldview, but instead through a “post-humanist, post-pluralist, and fractal” perspective wherein one human/nonhuman agent can assume a multitude of forms simultaneously. The strongest demonstration of this perspective is through his examples, perhaps most clearly in his account of the shamanic armor/costume (chap. 4) and the use of ironic humour (chap. 5). His post-humanist perspective brings to the study of North Asian shamanic agency ethnographic insights from North Africa (Geschiere), South Africa (Comaroff and Comaroff), and

Latin America (Whitehead, Taussig). While I agree on the whole with his analysis and with the ever-valiant attempt to get readers to accept the agency of nonhuman forces, his theoretical terms often seem to outrun his examples. At the heart of the study is a simple contrast between more or less successful Darhad ritual specialists (defined as “genuine shamans” or as *ataman*-politicians) and unsuccessful ones (“fake shamans” who are vulnerable to annoying fits of *agsan*). Pedersen defends this rather traditional attempt to outline a cosmology by attacking and discrediting proponents of “social constructivist paradigms” (180) who he claims are sceptical of such attempts. As much as I am also impatient with the endless pit of social constructivism, I think we all have to agree that his book is nonetheless an articulate and highly important work of interpretation, and not a “multinatural” artefact. Pedersen gives a convincing expert account in which Darhad agents perform more or less successful as ideal-typical shamans. Reading between lines, his expert evaluation may in fact differ from that of many Darhads themselves. I have not tried feeding my printed copy of the book with milk and wild reindeer fat to see if I can induce in it feats of multinaturalist agency (well, to be honest, I am a little afraid of doing so). I suspect that it does its work best as an expert narrative, just as the *ongod* spirit vessels do their work as embodiments of that which is powerful – and there is room in the universe for both.

The book is based on a doctoral dissertation and portions of two previously published chapters. Although all are equally well-written, often the chapters read better in isolation than as a single work. Ethnographically Pedersen aims to make an authoritative contribution to studies of Inner and North Asian shamanism. He located Darhad shamanism at a cross-continental pivotal point between horizontal forms of alliance between spirits and vertical forms of patrilineation (116). The author makes an interesting assertion that the condition of *agsan* did not exist, or at least was not as disruptive, in the socialist period, as it is now. He links this to the way that the authoritative structures of the state seemed to either control, “freeze,” or outshine the spirits that give rise to it (chap. 1). One has to be very careful in reading his terms to distinguish rhetorical arguments from his ethnography. The book works with several definitions of “shamanism” and of “shamans” which are not always clearly signposted. The headline terms, repeated in the title and in many sections, is the category of the “not quite shaman” (a more optimistic gloss on the local term “false shaman”) and the condition of “shamans without shamanism.” When read within the context of Pedersen’s cosmology, both imply that there exists a pure model of a shaman against which they can be measured. The “genuine shaman” seems to be defined by the ability to competently project and inhabit multiple forms and almost always has the traditional attributes of shamanism such as a costume. However, Pedersen’s own examples sometimes contradict this. The drunken *agsan* is another human figure but one that dimensionally holds “too much shamanism,” like a supercharged storm cloud. Thus he seems a bit more like a nonshaman than a “not quite shaman.” Similarly the unpredictable politician-