

however, insists: “the situation of violence itself has a dynamics that is more pervasive than racism” (4).

The reader must decide whether s/he is convinced by this. Then the reader can tackle Collins’s principle conclusion (334): “The good news is that there is nothing primordial about the things that people fight about. They are not long-lasting or deep-rooted social identities and antagonisms; the strength of such identities are products of just how intense the ritual technology is that situationally produces them. The bad news is that we are capable of creating new causes for violence, however ephemeral they may be.” Collins’s “Violence” explains social psychological processes better than any other I’ve read. His descriptions, however, come perilously close to de-linking these processes from “background” social conditions. John M. Hagedorn

**Cornwall, Andrea, Elizabeth Harrison, and Ann Whitehead** (eds.): *Feminisms in Development. Contradictions, Contestations, and Challenges*. London: Zed Books, 2007. 253 pp. ISBN 978-1-84277-819-7. Price: £ 18.99

Diese Sammlung von Aufsätzen ist in drei Teile aufgeteilt. Der erste Teil trägt den Titel: “The Struggle over Interpretation” und diskutiert in verschiedenen Artikeln Gender-Mythen in Politik und Praxis in Indien, Brasilien oder auch in den britischen Hilfeprogrammen. Der zweite Teil mit dem Titel “Institutionalizing Gender in Development” diskutiert Gender-Mainstreaming in Bürokratien oder unter wechselnden institutionellen Kontexten, die sich mit Entwicklung befassen. Der dritte Teil des Buches trägt den Titel “Looking to the Future. Challenges for Feminist Engagement”. Hier findet der Leser / die Leserin Artikel, die Themen diskutieren wie den Wiederaufbau nach Konflikten und die Rechte der Frauen sowie bezahlte Arbeit und die geschwächte Position von Frauen in der aktuellen globalen Wirtschaft.

Dieses Buch, geschrieben von führenden feministischen DenkerInnen aus dem Norden und dem Süden, stellt einen neuen Versuch dar, Feminismus in Studien, die sich mit Entwicklung befassen, zu verorten. Die Autoren sprechen vom Inneren der sozialen Bewegungen, der Entwicklungsbürokratien, der nationalen und internationalen Nichtregierungsorganisationen aus. Sie stellen unterschiedliche Kritiken einfacher Ideen über Gender vor und fragen, wie diese Ideen in Institutionen interpretiert und praktiziert werden. Besonders das Interesse des Feminismus für sozialen Wandel macht diesen für Entwicklungsstudien interessant. Viele Entwicklungsinstitutionen funktionieren momentan jedoch so, dass feministische Absichten durch bürokratische Strukturen und ungleiche Machtverhältnisse nicht durchgesetzt werden können. Auch die in Entwicklungsländern bestehenden Ungleichheiten stellen für Feministinnen eine große Herausforderung dar.

Das Buch, indem es eine Vielzahl von Ansätzen vorstellt, arbeitet so heraus, dass der Feminismus im Plural der Entwicklungsproblematik etwas zu sagen hat. Die Botschaft des Buches liegt darin, ein neues Interesse für

den Dialog zwischen Feminismus und Entwicklung zu wecken. Damit füllt das Buch eine Lücke im Buchmarkt, die auf Bücher zu diesem Thema aus den 1990er Jahren folgt, wie das von Marchand und Parpart herausgegebene Buch “Feminism, Postmodernism, Development” (New York 1995) oder “Women, Feminism, and Development”, von Piché und Dagenais herausgegeben (Femmes, féminisme et développement: Montreal 1994). Das besprochene Buch sollte an Universitäten und Institutionen der Entwicklungspolitik zur Kenntnis genommen werden und zum Nachdenken über die tatsächliche Rolle der Frauen in der Entwicklung anregen.

Ulrike Schuerkens

**de Bruijn, Mirjam, Rijk van Dijk, and Jan-Bart Gewald** (eds): *Strength beyond Structure. Social and Historical Trajectories of Agency in Africa*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2007. 344 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-15696-8. Price: € 41.00

This collection is the outcome of several academic workshops concerned with African social studies and the theoretical concept of “agency.” These conferences were held at Dutch universities in 2003–4 and consequently most of the contributors are directly or indirectly tied to Dutch academe. This volume consists of a brief editorial preface, a long editorial introduction, twelve essays based on diverse ethnographic areas in Africa, and a very brief epilogue by Francis Nyamnjoh. The twelve essays are: a critical contrast between the writings of the Manchester School and Evans-Pritchard’s “The Nuer” (Wim van Binsbergen), a thin analysis of the dreams recorded by an Angolan guerrilla fighter in 1961 (Inge Brinkman), a life of a Herero chief as a protonationalist in colonial Namibia (Jan-Bart Gewald), agency in Kapsiki religion in northern Cameroon and Nigeria (Wouter van Beek), domestic relations of Congolese housewives [in French] (Julie Ndaya), San trance rituals in Namibia (Thomas Widlok), family incomes and resource management in Zimbabwe (Ortrude Moyo), nature conservation and Black and White relations in South Africa (Malcolm Draper, Marja Spierenburg, and Harry Wels), solitary birth and concepts of privacy and shame among the Téra of Niger (Gertie Janssen), street children and youth in urban Chad (Mirjam de Bruijn), negotiating and maintaining elite status by two modern Fulbe noble-women (Lotte Pelckmans), and problems of maintaining ethnic and personal respectability in a group of emigrant Ghanaian pentacostalists living in Botswana (Rijk van Dijk).

In their introduction the editors equate agency with “human creativity and resilience,” observing that “there is no agency without reflectivity” and asserting that agency is “bound up with power, politics, and the social hierarchies they produce.” The concept remains vague, never clearly connected to any broader social theory. It seems akin to the ideas of “social action” and intent developed by American sociology such as in the works of Parsons and his followers. No such writers are ever mentioned and indeed most of the writers cited are from much later times. The editors credit such thinking among

British Africanists especially associated with the Manchester school inspired by Max Gluckman and his followers. No really early classic sociology is cited but the roots seem to be in Marxist thought. I assume that American (and hence Weberian and Simmelian) sociological influences were also significant. The editors' main concerns are that anthropologists consider how agency relates to understanding social change, conflict, colonialism and neocolonialism, and globalization in contemporary Africa. These are commendable purposes though many of the writers in this book seem to consider their approaches more innovative than they actually seem. Ironically, many of the essays seem somewhat weak in the ethnographic grassroot details that the editors associate with proper agency research.

The longest essay in this collection is the first, by van Binsbergen. I found it provocative and interesting though ultimately misleading and sometimes distortive, mainly because of its main argument, that Evans-Pritchard's "The Nuer" should be examined in terms of how it would be improved by introducing more data involving individual agency. It would then, of course, be a very different book, but that would not necessarily make it a better one. That would depend upon what the purpose of the book is seen to be. Van Binsbergen describes "The Nuer" (1940) as Evans-Pritchard's key work, as the representative Africanist monograph of its era. Both of these assertions seem questionable. I consider Evans-Pritchard's "Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande" (1937) his most influential work and would be hesitant to consider any one work by Evans-Pritchard quintessentially representative of his broad range of thinking and writing. I would also resist selecting any one work by any one anthropologist (and certainly not one by Evans-Pritchard) as quintessentially representative of the early post-World War II era in British Africanist anthropology, even though I do consider "The Nuer" a masterpiece of ethnographic writing and analysis. Van Binsbergen goes on to contrast "The Nuer" with works by members of the Manchester school, paying little attention to the writings of other British Africanists from London, Cambridge, or elsewhere. The Manchester writings are described as though they represented the better future path for students of modern African social studies to have taken. This polarizing of British Africanist anthropology involves a simplistic reading of many of the works of this period, a failure to recognize the diversity among works coming out of Manchester and Oxford, and a neglect of wider influences and interchanges that took place between British writers from other institutions, all of whom knew and were influenced by one another, whether they acknowledged this or not. Through American and European students connected to these schools, other powerful influences were also deeply significant.

Here is not the place for me to debate the details of van Binsbergen's long essay, but I briefly mention three examples of the distortions I have in mind so as to alert the reader to the kinds of difficulties his arguments and analyses sometimes present. Evans-Pritchard's structurally "abstract" and elegant 1940 model of Nuer social

structure (based on earlier work by Robertson Smith) has a powerful purpose in illuminating concepts about lineage, time, space, politics, and ecology, an argument hardly given proper analytical credit by van Binsbergen who gives too much attention to the admittedly important ecological factors. Evans-Pritchard recognized that he had not provided extended details of agency for he did provide considerable details in a complementary study that he presented earlier, a short monograph on Nuer kinship, residence, and local politics appearing in *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft* (1938) (later republished as a "Rhodes-Livingstone Paper" in 1945). Yet even in the more elegant later 1940 volume the central ideas make sense only if one appreciates how personal motives and agency lead to modification of kinship models and terms when applied to broader political requirements. For some grasp of this complex argument I refer the reader to Ivan Karp's and Kent Maynard's excellent account of "The Nuer" in *Current Anthropology* (1983). As for van Binsbergen's claim that Manchester publications epitomize agency, we should remember that the single greatest account of agency in a traditional African society is John Middleton's "Lugbara Religion," a monograph based on an Oxford dissertation "supervised" by Evans-Pritchard but clearly inspired by Meyer Fortes and representing a profound departure from much of Evans-Pritchard's methods. Finally, Elizabeth Colson's excellent work is cited by van Binsbergen as embodying some of the best work inspired by Manchester, but much of her thinking on agency, social change, and neocolonialism had been gained earlier in America as demonstrated by her superb monograph on the Makah Native Americans, a study written before she worked with Gluckman at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. I found van Binsbergen's essay stimulating and provocative, but these few examples should hint at the simplifications and distortions in his polarizing and critical arguments. In any case, it is not clear exactly where van Binsbergen thinks his arguments lead since the final two and a half pages of his conclusion are so distorted by prolix writing that they are hard to decipher, for example, six sentences with the lengths of 111, 59, 89, 93, 60, and 67 words.

Among the other essays perhaps the most interesting are those by van Beek, Gewald, Janssen, and Pelckmans. Some of the others are so thin in actual ethnographic data and analysis as to be of limited use. This is the kind of varied and uneven collection spawned by conferences. It belongs in a large research library devoted to African social studies. It is not essential for any general social science library or, given its high price, worth purchase by individual scholars. We did not need it to realize that some recognition of agency is a part of social analysis.

T. O. Beidelman

**Dostal, Walter** (Hrsg.): *Tribale Gesellschaften der südwestlichen Regionen des Königreiches Saudi-Arabien. Sozialanthropologische Untersuchungen*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2006. 713 pp. ISBN 978-3-7001-3598-2. Preis: € 80.00