

**Nygaard-Christensen, Maj, and Angie Bexley** (eds.): *Fieldwork in Timor-Leste. Understanding Social Change through Practice*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2017. 261 pp. ISBN 978-87-7694-209-0 (NIAS Studies in Asian Topics, 59). Price: £ 22.50

This edited volume is an important addition to the ever-increasing corpus of books on Timor-Leste. It presents wide range of research – topically, spatially, and temporarily. The contributors provide accounts, reflections, and self-analysis of various depths of their experiences and challenges of conducting field research in Timor-Leste from the perspective of specific social science and humanities research projects. The volume brings together the perspectives of senior, mid-, and early career researchers highlighting differences in experience, training, and academic perspectives, which is also evident in the nature of the self-reflexive evaluations of the challenges of fieldwork.

The eleven chapters of the volume have been organized into general thematic sections – Portuguese Timor, Fieldwork in a New Nation, Spatiality and Temporality, Post-Conflict Fieldwork, and Positionality – as the editors explain in the first chapter. Hick's contribution contrasts experiences of doing field research in Portuguese Timor and the new nation. He highlights the importance of background preparation before even going to the field – whether archival or language. The chapter also addresses the importance of key cultural participants and the gatekeepers to communities; and the ways these may impact the direction and eventual focus of research. Indeed, the need to be adaptable and respond quickly to developing field situations is an important point of the chapter. Doing research over a long period of time also impacts the ease with which our cultural participants give us information as Hicks contrast his work in the new nation to that in Portuguese Timor.

Roque's chapter highlights the close relationship between history and anthropology in knowledge production as he addresses the mystery of the Timorese skulls found in the anthropology museum in Coimbra. The author discusses the assumptions in the discourses about the "other" which produced the mystery in the first place and the obscuring of the shared histories of colonial warfare along with the role of the Catholic Church which he uncovered through meticulous detective work in archival historical sources.

McWilliam's contribution focuses on forest and resource management research amongst the people of Lautem and the often opportunistic and accidental way anthropologists end up working on some of their research projects. This chapter also highlights the importance of long-term research and changing ethnographic realities along with the beneficial nature of comparative research – having a background in a related culture makes the production of research in a new area more efficient.

Bexley's chapter on the young generation has less of an emphasis on the challenges of fieldwork and mainly focused on the research of the politics of belonging among the young Indonesian educated generation that has been sidelined and negatively stereotyped in national dis-

courses. Her work contextualizes the youth and belonging in the new nation-state through interviews and a thorough analysis of the *Talitakum* publication.

Kammen's chapter provides a great overview of the historical changes in administrative units, demographic patterns, and the multiple systems of social status these changes entail from colonial period to present. The author also highlights how these changes can give the basis of contestations and challenges of authority, and in modern times of the new nation-state, impact on electoral districts and laws which can be used to disenfranchise and exclude the modern rural populations from full participation and the economic benefits of oil.

Bovensiepen's chapter uses her Laclubar case study in exploring the complex relationships between power and kinship. The author takes the political position of the Osorio brothers as a starting point from which to extricate the deep entanglements of the local and national historical significance of the region and the ways in which kinship and power are intertwined in different historical periods. She highlights the dynamic responses of leadership shaped by outside influences and the complex interplay of political allegiances and kinship that stretch over different historical periods – Portuguese, Japanese, and Indonesian.

In her chapter on land conflict research Thu explores the challenges of doing research on this complex and highly contested topic and her positionality as a researcher – female, Asian (Burmese) from Australia, and the shifting position of insider and outsider. Her research in Mulia and Daisua emphasizes the importance of origin villages and the movement between resettlements and origin village examining local discourses of contested claims and the historical shifts on power and territoriality and the legitimacy of power.

Nygaard-Christensen's contribution, examines the production of political controversy through a leaked UN document. She calls our attention to the importance of understanding the dynamic and systemic interaction between local, national, and international political processes. The author highlights the ways in which the international agenda of democracy promotion will permeate all major political processes, policies, and decision making at the local level. The author did an excellent job on extricated the co-constitutive nature of the "dynamics of international presence and Timorese polity within the same political terrain."

Neves is the only Timorese contributor to the volume focusing on applied policy research from development to petroleum dependency. In this chapter, the author explains some of the unique challenges of his position as a Timorese researcher and as engaged citizens. His chapter also provides an important discussion of Timorese views on the challenges of development, the role of petroleum in development policy, and the lack of transparency of foreign aid. The author argues that foreign experts of the donor nations show a lack of understanding of the local conditions and viewpoints and apply a "cookie cutter" approach importing things that may have worked from other contexts. He highlights the disjuncture in power relations and the heavy influence of foreign experts on the

lives of Timorese through the donor nations' impact on national policies.

The last chapter by Rothschild examines the power relations of producing knowledge on how violence of the Indonesian period is remembered by looking at the case study of Kraras where a major massacre took place. The author analyses the dispute she had with a documentary filmmaker who was producing a film on the massacre, thus overlapping projects trying to "tell the story" through different approaches. The author engages in self-reflexive discussion of positionality and explores some of the issues of who has rights or "authority" over knowledge and knowledge creation and the old anthropological "possessiveness" of "my people," "my village" – all of which reflects important power relations in knowledge production.

The authors make a narrow use of existing comparative literature not just on Timor-Leste but more especially of the general literature in the specific disciplines represented in this volume. Not all the chapters address fieldwork and the challenges of doing fieldwork in Timor-Leste to the same degree. The book will be of interest to academics specialized in Timor-Leste and Southeast Asia in the social sciences and humanities. While it is not a methodology book, it will be a welcome addition to any social science methodology class given the highly comparative issues of doing field research in other part of the world as well. The book would be of interest as well to scholars working in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies, particularly on post-conflict regions. Policy makers in the Timor-Leste government and foreign development agencies might also find the viewpoints, approaches, and analysis in some of the chapters useful. I would strongly recommend this book.

Andrea Katalin Molnar

**Omarkhali, Khanna:** *The Yezidi Religious Textual Tradition. From Oral to Written. Categories, Transmission, Scripturalisation, and Canonisation of the Yezidi Oral Religious Texts.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017. 625 pp. + CD-ROM. ISBN 978-3-447-10856-0. (Studies in Oriental Religions, 72). Price: € 98.00

Im deutschsprachigen Raum waren die Yeziden als ethnische und religiöse Gruppe mit den traditionellen Siedlungsgebieten im Norden des Irak, in Nordsyrien sowie in der Südosttürkei v. a. durch Karl Mays Roman "Durchs wilde Kurdistan" (1892) bekannt sowie durch die von M. Bittner im Jahre 1913 in deutscher Übersetzung veröffentlichten "Heiligen Bücher der Jeziden oder Teufelsanbeter". Diese beiden Publikationen vermittelten eine zwar nicht grundsätzlich falsche, aber verzerrte und fragmentarische Kenntnis über diese Religion. Diese Situation hat sich seit den 1990er Jahren dahingehend geändert, als Ph. Kreyenbroek (Yezidism. Lewiston 1995; Kreyenbroek and Kh. Rashow: *God and Sheikh Adi are Perfect.* Wiesbaden 2005) eine Reihe von Texten in englischer Übersetzung bekanntmachte, wodurch die Erforschung der Yeziden maßgebliche Impulse erhielt. Diese Neuorientierung wurde auch aufgrund politischer Entwicklungen im Vorderen Orient seit den 1980er Jahren

mitbedingt, als ein bis zur Gegenwart andauernder Zustrom yezidischer Flüchtlinge nach Mitteleuropa einsetzte. Dadurch leben nun viele Yeziden in Deutschland, die sich um die Bewahrung ihrer religiösen Überlieferung bemühen und dafür auch der Kooperation mit Forschern aufgeschlossen sind.

Die Studie von Khanna Omarkhali analysiert erstmals Überlieferungsprozesse der oralen Tradition dieser Religionsgemeinschaft und ihrer Autoritäten. Durch Feldforschungen zur Dokumentation oraler Texte und Interviews mit hochrangigen Yeziden besonders in der Autonomen Region Kurdistan, in Armenien und in Deutschland hat die Vf. zahlreiche Texte gesammelt und teilweise auf der CD dem Buch beigelegt. In systematischer Weise behandelt die Vf. in Teil I der Studie (37–293) Fragen der mündlichen und schriftlichen Überlieferung durch unterschiedliche literarische Genres, ferner Fragen der Weitergabe und des Erlernens dieser Texte sowie die gegenwärtige Diskussion über die mögliche "Kanonisierung" verbindlicher Texte. Drei Exkurse (295–405) geben Einblick in den Variantenreichtum verschiedener Hymnen, Manuskripte und Mythen, wobei diese Beispiele den höchst komplexen Überlieferungsprozess verdeutlichen. Teil II der Studie (407–525) bietet einen detaillierten Katalog aller bislang bekannten poetischen und Prosatexte der Religionsgemeinschaft und dokumentiert für die *Qewls* (Hymnen) den jeweiligen Status des Textes, trifft Aussagen zur Performanz (inklusive Musikbegleitung) und benennt die mögliche oder zugeschriebene Urheberschaft für diese Texte (527–544). Angaben zu den verwendeten Quellen und Informanten, ein kurzes Glossar wichtiger Begriffe, Sekundärliteratur und Indices schließen die Arbeit ab.

Im Folgenden seien zentrale Aspekte detaillierter hervorgehoben. Lehrinhalte der Yeziden werden traditionell auf mündlichem Wege weitergegeben, so dass die Vf. in einem wichtigen Kapitel die beiden lange bekannten angeblichen "Heiligen Schriften", das *Jilwa* (Offenbarung) und das *Mashafā Raš* (Schwarzes Buch), untersucht (48–52): Sie stellt fest, dass es sich dabei mit großer Wahrscheinlichkeit nicht um alte yezidische "Heilige Schriften" handelt, sondern dass sie sekundär in Analogie zum Modell "Heiliger Schriften" der monotheistischen Religionen verfasst wurden, als westliche Forscher seit dem Ende des 19. Jh.s. die Existenz einer Heiligen Schrift entsprechend ihrer eigenen religiösen Ideen auch als "Kernstück" der yezidischen Tradition erwarteten. Die in diesen beiden Büchern erwähnten Inhalte widersprechen zwar nicht yezidischen Vorstellungen über Schöpfung, Gottesvorstellungen und z. T. religiöse Praktiken, aber beide Werke sind keine normativen Texte. Dasselbe gilt für die "Schriftlichkeit" einer anderen Manuskriptgruppe, deren Bedeutung die Vf. erschließt (58–66): Es handelt sich um v. a. arabische Manuskripte, so genannte *Miṣûr*, die die religiöse Überlieferung der Abstammungslinien der Pîrs darlegen. Entsprechend den 40 Pîr-Lineages soll es 40 verschiedene *Miṣûr* gegeben haben, die angeblich noch zu Lebzeiten Şêxadîs (Shaykh 'Adî; gestorben ca. 1160/1162) von den ersten Pîrs geschrieben wurden. Die Pîrs sind – gleich wie die Şêxs (*shaykhs*) – die so-