Barnard also has a short comment on this [45].) Barnard's book is interesting in that it combines both, as the author frequently goes almost mid-sentence from Whorf or Foucault to last year's results on ancient hominin DNA or primate vocalisation. However, overall, the book is leaning more towards the former – "philosophical" – tradition in the study of language origins.

This is partly reflected in the book's content, but mostly in the style of its presentation. The 135 pages contain a healthy dose of facts and observations that are all relevant, informative, and interesting, but fail to be connected into a coherent whole. Rather, the form is that of a loose essay, combining reviewing literature and commentary with asides, interludes, and personal stories and anecdotes. The relatively popular character of "Language in Prehistory" does make it accessible to non-specialists, which is certainly a virtue – but it does come at a price. The description goes in-breadth rather than in-depth, and some very general assertions, such as that language is inseparable from culture, cognition, or even myth (95) do not always unpack into adequate specifics. Some subtleties are necessarily lost, as for example when the author makes straightforward inferences from having the modern FOXP2 mutation to having language (e.g., 111, 123, 130; admittedly with some caveats). Finally, the picture of language emergence would be more complete with a discussion of several lines of laboratory research such as cultural evolution experiments or experimental semiotics, which in the last decade have become probably the most important source of evidence for the field of language evolution.

Consequently, "Language in Prehistory" is somewhat disappointing; this is especially so, coming from such an accomplished author of imposing academic stature. The reader will be hard-pressed to find a central motif, a unifying theme, or even the "red thread" that would afford the coherence necessary to bind the book together. A potential central claim is the importance of the narrative and myth-making functions of language for its origins (xi, 54): complex language was needed to tell stories. (So, a "narrative theory," as opposed to, e.g., a "foraging theory" or "memetic theory [53 f.]. These are of course just descriptive labels, not theories in a technical sense.) Barnard indeed addresses these points repeatedly and from different angles, but just stops short of developing the many valuable insights into systematic argumentation.

When it comes to the advantages, the breadth of Barnard's scholarship is impressive. The author reviews a good selection of more or less specific arguments made in the field of language evolution, and even to readers broadly familiar with this literature, the book offers some new insights. One example is a useful review of the ranges of dates that have been put on the earliest origins of language and/or human behavioural and cognitive modernity (35–38, 110–113). From today's perspective, it is also interesting to observe how over the last decade Barnard's own estimate of 130,000 years (as a minimum for "early language", e.g., 24, 110, 131) has gone from a bold to a mainstream or maybe even conservative one.

Perhaps the greatest strength of "Language in Prehistory" derives from its anthropological point of view – particularly valuable given how anthropology is underrepresented in language evolution. In this respect, Barnard's book is a useful reminder of fascinating facts that we are otherwise prone to overlook – especially facts about hunter-gatherers, such as their intellectual sophistication or pervasive multilingualism.

Sławomir Wacewicz

Bharadwaj, Aditya: Conceptions. Infertility and Procreative Technologies in India. New York: Berghahn Books, 2016. 292 pp. ISBN 978-1-78533-230-2. (Fertility, Reproduction, and Sexuality, 34) Price: $ 110.00

Aditya Bharadwaj introduces the book describing how traditional and modern interpretations permeate each other to engage with reproductive technologies. It is a challenging research idea to tread as "modern" or "traditional" fluid entities and it is very difficult to draw a line between the two. The author expresses the cultural disjunction between the metaphors of baby-making as "natural" (*prakriti*) and "biomedical" (technology). He talks about contemporary Hindu interpretations that connect the imagined past to the present and the present to the imagined future, especially with reference to nuclear bombs, aircraft, IVF, surrogacy, and stem cell technologies. These are claims that cannot be proved or disproved. The author refers to Ramayana and Mahabharata, Rigveda, Upanishad, Arthashastra, Manu script as classic traditional texts, while biomedicine is defined as a modern entity. He clearly states that he does not want to engage in a discourse on whether this produces innocuous, expedient consequences or whether India faces a "mistaken modernity." His argument is that interpretations that draw on the past do not establish a truthful and objective narration of the present. He says that contemporary Indian reality, that is seemingly modern, is traditional inwardly and those traditional concerns that appear to be traditional are in fact curious interpretations within its cultural context. This book intends to raise concerns about how traditional cosmological frameworks shape beliefs and norms about human (in)fertility, which in turn produces stigma and suffering, and how patients and clinicians make sense of the success and failure of biomedicine in the wider context of Hindu traditions.

A detailed review of culture and infertility in chap. 1 refers to Vedic and Puranic texts in interpretations describing sperms as "seed" and womb as a "field," idealized role of motherhood, symbolization of a son as an accomplishment of fatherhood, and notions of female purity, among others. He refers to the Manu script, in which the presence of the seed would mean the male receives primacy but the absence of the seed would mean that the field gains prominence (donor insemination). Male fertility, hence, can easily be overcome by replacing his seed with his brother's, but not the field (the womb). These understandings, he says, place a higher burden of fertility on women which, according to him, is disseminated through dramatization of the epics in media. According to the author, the *niyoga* model provides explanation for accepting new reproductive technologies such as donor insemina-

tion. (The *niyoga* model in which a woman – whose husband is either incapable of fatherhood or has died without having a child – would request and appoint a person for helping her bear a child.) The narratives in chapters 5 and 6 reveal that indeed there is acceptance for *niyoga* model among couples but with an amplified segment of secrecy. However, in contrast to this assumption, a lady respondent referred to her genetic component as a "seed" (155). Another woman refused donor-insemination preferring adoption although her husband was supportive of the *niyoga* model (156). There was a strong argument for genetic credentials which effects their decision against adoption. In one such narrative on the quality of the child "the parent's genes are bound to show up in the child" (162). The author relates this description with evidence that children in India are abandoned primarily due to pre-/extra-marital relationships. If this is true, people interpret their desired attributes in children based on convenience and contemporary situations and not merely in quasi-religious models. Another doctor denies the *niyoga* model by saying pious women will not accept another man's sperms to have a child and would rather prefer to adopt. The interpretation of an adopted child as "a bastard" in one of the narratives is probably defined by same contemporary inference that many children are as "unwanted" by unwed mothers. Hence, people tend to make decisions based on present requirements and seek to justify it with a variety of explanations, cultural or otherwise.

I contend that people hardly read the original Sanskrit texts of Vedas or Upanishads but tend to read translated version of Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagavad Gita either in the form of folklore or watched as television serials that iterate these stories. Other embodied forms of knowledge, that is not referred to in this book, are those transferred in daily life experiences of rituals as *pujas* (religious worship ritual), baby showers, marriages, *bhajans* (songs with religious theme or spiritual ideas), story-telling in *vrata pujas*, to name a few, that spread notions of (in)fertility, especially the birth of a son. I hoped that such versions of daily life interpretations would have emerged in the later chapters of this book, but the narratives of people's infertility experiences do not make any direct reference to classical texts, folklore, or daily life stories. Instead, such an inference has been drawn from the narratives by the author himself and, hence, cannot be identified with specific texts or stories from the past which I find methodologically problematic. It would have been more interesting to ask the participants, how they relate their experience of the present technologies to the past in the form of literature, folklore in their day-to-day experiences. There are numerous complex interpretations of infertility and procreation practiced in the form of rituals, as Hinduism is considered a way of life followed by all religions in the subcontinent, not just by Hindus and hence day-to-day experiences can be an important form of embodiment. Another important form of cultural interpretation that this book missed is that the cultural Indian literature speaks not merely in terms of the body-mind binary but relates to soul and reincarnation. It would have been interesting to learn how people related these understandings with their experience of using reproductive technologies.

In chap. 6, the author refers to commercial gestational surrogacy in India, drawing analogies with organ trade as an exploitative (re)production and the ineffectiveness of the state. Chapters 7 and 8 elaborate the quasi-scared cultural interactions between the fertility treatment seekers, treatment providers, and the technology that produce social suffering and stigma. Although the treatment seekers hold the providers responsible for eluding conception, the mounting costs, and a lack of human touch, they continue pursuing clinical options which according to the author brings them deeper into the same quasi-religious ideas that delegitimizes infertility. Chap. 3 discusses the contested conceptions reflected in the medical politics of test-tube babies; chap. 2 provides a detailed review of the social stigma and blame of infertility and how it affects both men and women. In chap. 4 there is given a detailed review of the role of the state and biomedicine in the politics of conception in India. Feminist discourse has been very well explained in various sections in this book but it has not been carried into data collection and analysis as that was not the book's aim. This book is the first ethnography on infertility in India emphasizing on people's cultural-religious experience with assisted reproductive technology and overall reveals valuable infertility experiences in India and the interactions between various players in the politics of conception and, thus, is an important source for future research on this topic.

Sheela Saravanan

Boekraad, Mardoeke: Ecological Sustainability in Traditional Sámi Beliefs and Rituals. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2016. 166 pp. ISBN 978-3-631-66598-5. (Moderne, Kulturen, Relationen, 20) Price: € 42.95

The only indigenous ethnic minority of northwestern Europe – the Saami – straddle the arctic and subarctic regions of contiguous regions across Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula of Russia. While acknowledging considerable historical depth and a wide swath of geographic breadth, Mardoeke Boekraad mainly focuses on the most northerly, most populous, and least endangered subset of North Saami for her ethnographic, ethnologic, and sociological case studies of beliefs and practices pertaining to Saami cultural embeddedness in larger, and changing, transnational societies and global ecologies. Foregrounded amongst these beliefs and practices are those myths and rituals drawing on documented traditions as maintained and transformed in contemporary generations facing challenges from within and from beyond Saami society. Her book is a translation of her 2013 master's thesis at the University of Bergen, Norway.

Boekraad draws on the rich corpus of already-documented Saami oral histories in considering how best to connect with and expand that genre in Saapmi (Lapland), while also reflecting on challenging conditions facing this and other Fourth World peoples. Although the Saami reside in four contiguous nation-states, their own local cultures inflect around regional land use along wa-