

through uncertainty, she argues. Finally, Romain examines the situation of single professional, North American women facing what has been labelled the “crisis of childlessness.” She shows the way in which women use egg freezing as “a strategy for managing and coping with unknown futures,” and for creating hope in the face of anxiety over what is known about age-related infertility.

The editors of the volume point to some broad common themes that loosely link together the diverse chapters: namely, exchange and relationality, personhood, and time. Different aspects of ignorance are examined via each of these themes. What the editors do not attempt to do in their introduction is to provide beyond this minimal form of identification, any deeper sense of, or the broader conclusions about, the nature of ignorance, its production, reproduction, and productivity. There is a particularistic and contextually specific approach confined to ethnographic case studies. Their conclusions focus primarily on field methods and ethics, and the final paragraph of the “Introduction” poses eleven or so questions following from the idea of making ignorance an ethnographic object. Is this an opportunity missed? Perhaps we will never know. Roy Dilley

Jeremiah, Anderson H. M.: *Community and Worldview among Paraiyars of South India. “Lived” Religion.* London: Bloomsbury, 2013. 211 pp. ISBN 978-1-4411-7881-7. Price: £ 9.75

What does it mean to be Dalit *and* to be Christian? In the past several years, the literature on Dalits, on Dalit theology, and also on Dalit Christianity in India is increasing. This is happening against the backdrop of a political and legal struggle to obtain constitutional recognition as Dalits for the “ex-untouchable” Muslims and Christians. It is also the outcome of a huge shift in studies of religion in India over the last few decades. After Dumont’s celebrated if controversial studies, the critique of his ideas opened up the space in Indian sociology and social anthropology for the study of the diversity and complexity of India’s religious traditions, turning away partly from the earlier overwhelming focus on Hinduism. With respect to Indian Christians, of whom Dalits and tribals are the largest component, a number of interesting and dense studies have recently appeared; Jeremiah’s book is the latest contribution to this rapidly widening subfield.

However, Jeremiah’s understanding of the question posed at the start of this review is inflected with a significant difference for he writes as a Dalit Christian and a Paraiyar himself, even if one who had for long remained shielded from the cruelty of that knowledge and that position. Jeremiah’s study is based on his fieldwork in the village of Thulasigramam. Thulasigramam is only about 120 km from the swiftly changing city of Chennai, but the patterns of life Jeremiah describes for the Paraiyar reek of oppressive tradition and a debilitating lack of choices. Jeremiah brings out the many dimensions of the violence suffered by the Paraiyars on an everyday basis: physical violence, verbal abuse, the violence of fear and shame, of helplessness and perpetual dependency, and of alien-

ation – spatial as well as from the public resources of the village.

Christianity has enabled the Paraiyar the opportunity to constitute their identity anew. This is true in other parts of the country as well from where we obtain evidence that the shift to Christianity has been significant in making Dalits conscious of their identity and, in some cases, given them the symbolic and collective resources not only to assert themselves against the humiliation of a stigmatized identity but to lead the struggles of others against it. This is very much the case, for instance, in Andhra Pradesh where the church – regardless of denomination – is predominantly Dalit. Even the Paraiyars that Jeremiah interacted with, despite their conspicuous subordination to the landowning Reddys, find various ways to subvert and challenge their stigmatizing caste identity.

For instance, Jeremiah narrates how the Paraiyars have laid claim to a hill where they placed a cross and which they named Oliva Malai (Olive Mount). Despite Reddy objections and attempts to reclaim the hill, the Paraiyars fenced off the hill path and have formally applied to their elected representative to have the spot declared as a Christian sacred site. Further, the hill is higher than the one close by on which stands a temple to Lord Murugan, thus enabling a young Paraiyar person to claim that “our cross is higher than their Murugan” (135). In other words, Christianity is superior even if in reality the Christian Paraiyar are subject to their earthly Hindu masters.

Thus, conversion to Christianity has given the Dalits a modicum of dignity and sense of worth. Even when they are not entirely able to emerge from under the humiliating duties imposed upon them by the dominant caste, their adoption of new forms of dress, practices of personal hygiene and deportment helps them to separate themselves from their oppressive past as well as assert themselves against the shame of their present-day position. At the same time, destructive hierarchical patterns tend to be reproduced within the Paraiyar community and not just between it and the dominant Reddys.

Jeremiah’s fieldwork undercuts romantic ideas about Dalit cohesion and communitarian values. He shows how Paraiyars make invidious distinctions among themselves between the “purer” who live closer to the church and the more “sinful” who reside at a distance from it. Gender is a strong marker of difference, within and without the church. Within the church, women are expected to sit on the floor; the chairs are occupied by men. Moreover, the differences between the lives and the life-chances of Paraiyar men and women outside of the church emerge from the text.

Thus, the author narrates his experience of beginning to understand the extent to which Dalits continue to bear the stigma of “untouchability” and to experience discrimination within their own churches, and within the educational, health and allied institutions run by these churches. Even when sheer numbers have forced the inclusion of Dalits into situations of power or control, it is usually the urban educated Dalits who come to occupy the bulk of such positions. Moreover, the facilities offered by such institutions are usually affordable only by middle class

and elite groups among non-Christians and Christians. For the Dalit Christians, this is a major concern. Though the church runs schools and hospitals, these are out of the reach of the poor Dalits, and there is little proactive effort to make such facilities affordable for or accessible to the Dalit Christians. Thus, despite the church's significant presence in the fields of development, education, health, and social work – in the running of a range of institutions and social welfare activities – the benefits of these are not available to their own Dalit members.

Jeremiah's finding has important implications at a broader level when one thinks about the movement by Christian Dalits to be recognized as Scheduled Castes by the Indian state. For many among them, the struggle is as much about finding dignity within their own churches as it is about gaining access to government benefits that such a categorization would make them eligible for. In fact, so egregious are the forms of discrimination faced by Christian Dalits that leaders of the movement say that the church's attitudes are unlikely to change unless the government forces a shift by categorizing the Dalit Christians as Scheduled Castes, thus strengthening their social position and making them a group with legitimate and legal claims on the state. Thus, Jeremiah's work is important for showing us that even at present there is caste both inside and outside the church and bias and discrimination are widespread. While some Dalit Christian communities are able to seclude themselves somewhat because they live in villages dominated by their own members, this is not the case for those living in multi-caste villages, where they are subjected by the Hindus to the same degrading treatment meted out to other Dalits.

Rowena Robinson

Johnson, Scott A. J.: *Translating Maya Hieroglyphs.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013; 385 pp. ISBN 978-0-8061-4333-0. Price: \$ 34.95

Die auf Wort- und Silbenzeichen basierende Hieroglyphenschrift der Klassischen Maya (250–900 n. Chr.) ist das bisher einzige lesbare Schriftsystem auf dem amerikanischen Kontinent, das auf Tausenden von Schriftträgern zu uns gekommen ist. Mit Hilfe dieser Inschriften wurde in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten nicht nur die Geschichte zahlreicher Königtümer und deren Vernetzung untereinander rekonstruiert, sondern die Texte ermöglichen darüber hinaus spannende Einblicke in die geistige Welt der herrschenden Oberschicht dieser Kultur. Obschon die meisten Hieroglyphentexte heute lesbar sind und Phonologie, Grammatik und Syntax des Klassischen Maya – die Sprache der Hieroglyphen – weitgehend verstanden wird, gilt das Schriftsystem bis heute nicht als vollständig entziffert. Bis in die Gegenwart etwa wird über die Entzifferung von Graphemen oder Fragen zur Phonologie des Klassischen Maya kontrovers diskutiert (64 f.), so dass die Entzifferung dieses altamerikanischen Schriftsystems trotz der Fortschritte weiterhin im Prozess ist und mit fast täglichen neuen Erkenntnissen aufwartet. Der stetig anwachsende Forschungsapparat zu der Mitte des 19. Jh.s initiierten Mayaschriftforschung umfasst

mittlerweile eine fünfstellige Zahl an Titeln und bis heute sind nur wenige Übersichtswerke erschienen, die den Forschungsstand zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt evaluierten und zentrale Erkenntnisse konzise zusammenfassten. Studierende und Interessierte verlieren sich in dieser Informationsflut und können daher nur mit Hilfe von Fachleuten die relevante Forschungsliteratur finden. Der an der Tulane Universität promovierte Autor des vorliegenden Bandes hat hier ein tatsächliches Forschungsdesiderat erkannt und bei der University of Oklahoma Press ein Referenz-, Lehr- und Übungsbuch veröffentlicht, mit dessen Hilfe Studierende und der interessierte Laie Schrift und Sprache der Klassischen Maya im Selbststudium lernen kann (3 f.). Die Idee und Durchführung ist allerdings nicht neu, vergleichbare Bücher geringeren Umfangs wurden im vergangenen Jahrzehnt bereits 2002 von John Montgomery sowie von Michael D. Coe und Marc Van Stone (2005) veröffentlicht. Mit 386 Seiten stellt Johnsons Buch allerdings das bislang umfangreichste Übersichtswerk zur Mayaschrift dar und schließt gemäß der eher mangelhaft redigierten Literaturliste (367–371) die Forschungsliteratur bis 2010 ein, die nicht jeden Titel berücksichtigt, den der Autor am Ende der Kapitel 1, 2 und 4 als grundlegende bzw. weiterführende Literatur angibt. So sucht man etwa vergebens im Literaturverzeichnis das auf Seite 13 genannte Werk von Michael D. Coe und Mark Van Stone. Erstaunt stellt der Rezensent fest, dass im fast vierzigseitigen Kapitel 3 zu Kalender, Zeitvorstellung und Astronomie *keine* Literatur zitiert wird, geschweige denn Grundlagen bzw. weiterführende Literatur aufgelistet werden, so dass die mit diesem Buch angesprochenen Studierenden und Laien den Eindruck gewinnen könnten, es handle sich – überspitzt formuliert – um Forschungserkenntnisse des Autors. Im Gegenteil – das Kalendersystem und die astronomischen Inhalte der Maya-Texte wurden in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jh.s entschlüsselt und hier hätte der Autor in Kapitel 3 immerhin auf Eric Thompsons im Vorwort (xvii) und in der Literaturliste genanntes Standardwerk über Kalender und Astronomie der Klassischen Maya aus dem Jahr 1950 in seinen detailreichen Ausführungen hinweisen können. Diese frappante Unterlassung von Literaturangaben in Kapitel 3 ist hervorzuheben und ist ein großes Manko dieses ansonsten reich illustrierten Buches, das aus einer Einleitung (3–13), Kapiteln über das Schriftsystem (15–57), Phonologie und Sprache (59–72), Zahlensystem und Kalender (73–120), grammatischen Grundlagen des Klassischen Maya (121–164), dem Verbalsystem (165–191), einem Kapitel mit Analysebeispielen aus Piedras Negras und Palenque (193–217) und umfassenden Appendizes (219–364) mit Grammatikübersichten, Zeichenlisten, Lexikon und kurzen Diskussionen über Kalendersoftware und die Illustration von Schriftträgern besteht. Konzept und Aufbau dieses Buches sind nicht neu und folgen in der Hauptsache dem Aufbau in den Inhalten von Begleithandbüchern zu Kongressen und Kursen über Mayaschrift, die seit 1977 jährlich in den Vereinigten Staaten und seit 1996 in Europa stattfinden und mittlerweile weitgehend auf Fachportalen online abrufbar sind (3). Jedes Kapitel besteht aus reich bebilderten Erklärungen, Übungsaufgaben mit Lösungen