most of the references come from the likes of Malinowski, Lévi-Strauss, Gupta, or Clifford – names of which all prospective anthropologists must be able to recognise immediately. If anthropology had not take a mobilities turn of its own, this book pushes the agenda.

The rest of the volume then deals with the central, and by now recurrent, problematic of how can scholars, and particularly ethnographers, deal with a mobile world. Although not entirely a novelty, the book does indeed offer fresh insights, perspectives, and solutions to the puzzle of grasping the seemingly-always-elusive mobility, particularly by addressing a discipline erstwhile destined to the study of the particularities and peculiarities of cultures defined as *places*. In this book, mobile ethnography, as formulated above, appears as but an option amongst many others, placed alongside several techniques of "staying put" to study mobility (Coates', Lucht's, and Vasantkumar's chapters), the development of a "borderline ethnography" (Andersson's contribution), methods that tackle digital mobilities (Walton), the usage of photography (Vium) as well as of records of previous ethnographic explorations (Österlund-Pötzsch), and even the occasional analysis of material life in vans (Leivestad). All in the name of, as the authors highlight, reflecting "on the ways in which mobility acquires, and requires, specific forms of methodological thinking and acting" (3). Have the authors cracked the problem? Certainly not. But good hints are to be found within their pages.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in the field of mobilities and in particular to ethnographers of movement – to all of them really, not only to the ones more aligned with anthropology. Also, my bet is that a volume such as this has the potential to become an important handbook for all graduate students chasing after mobile fields and the realms of movement.

André Nóvoa

Elmore, Mark: Becoming Religious in a Secular Age. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016. 292 pp. ISBN 978-0-520-29054-9. Price: £ 22.95

This book charts the emergence of a concept of religion in the state of Himachal Pradesh in the Indian Himalayas, tracing its genesis to the demand for a shared history and culture that newly independent India levied on these mountainous regions as a condition for granting them collective statehood. Elmore's argument takes as its point of departure India's refusal to grant Himachal full statehood in 1948, deeming it insufficiently developed to manage its own affairs. That rejection inspired the architect of the contemporary state of Himachal Pradesh, Yashwant Singh Parmar, to embark on a project that would shape and articulate the people's common identity and cultural distinctiveness as well as modernize the remote region. Elmore's book details the ways in which those two projects – the creation of a shared Himachali identity and modernization – were deeply conjoined with one another. The quest for a suitable modernity would involve Parmar in leading his people away from what the Indian state deemed backward superstition to the authentic religiosity that would prove they had advanced adequately enough to merit full assimilation into national life.

Beginning in the 1950s, land reforms that broke up large estates and redistributed parcels to former tenants had the greatest effect on Himachal's temples, which often controlled agricultural production in the region. Land redistribution not only curtailed temples' revenue but also severed their connection to the economic and material life of the people. Local deities were thereby untethered from everyday social transactions and became, instead, objects of faith (*viśvās*) and nostalgia. Filmmakers, government anthropologists, and local historians came to produce materials that "provided an operating narrative of the state that grounded the state's authority in its local theistic practices" while "employing [those practices] … in the service of the emerging state" (95). Elmore studies how religion and the state began to interpenetrate one another to a greater and greater extent in the late 20th century, the state managing and even sponsoring religious affairs such as festivals and rituals while it provided overt support to oracular mediums and local deities. These features of Himachali cultural practice then, in turn, came to be figured according to administrative metaphors. ("The *devatā* (local god) is a policeman" is a common one.) In this ongoing process, Elmore argues the state generates normative modes of religiosity that delocalized religious practice in favor of producing a composite *devīdevatā saṇskṛti* (god-goddess culture), a phrase that evokes a timeless Himachali religion. These normative modes have authorized the state's intervention in local practices such as animal sacrifice by declaring them barbarism rather than constitutionally protected religion. In these ways, "religion" has functioned as both the condition and the product of modernization and development in Himachal Pradesh.

The book exhibits two particular strengths. The first is the texture of the evidence brought to bear. Elmore sees the processes he describes in a vast array of historical developments and social products, from locally produced histories to oracular practices to urbanization. The second is less unqualified, lying in the author's astute perception of the trajectory of religious change in the Himalayas under conditions of rapidly shifting forces following India's independence in 1947. Land reform, the creeping dominance of Hindi as a language of everyday expression, the expansion of tourism, infrastructure development, transformations in ethnomedia, and the appearance of high-caste Hindu nationalism are among the factors that the author effectively narrates as he assembles a history of the spread of *devīdevatā saṇskṛti*, demonstrating the contingency, if not the fragility, of contemporary Himachali identity. In this respect, however, the author stops short of a comprehensive discussion of Himachali subjectivities in the context of the secular age his title invokes. His engagement with the persons and communities he argues are becoming religious seems often episodic. If readers come away appreciating the broad contours of cultural transformation in Himachal Pradesh and the manifold factors that have fed it, they might possess a less developed sense for the agents of those transformations and the subjects who were formed in their wake. While this

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may be entirely consistent with Elmore's argument that "religious change has come about in relation to [the] forces of calculation, planning, control, and organization that mark modern forms of power" (147) and is, he insists, authorless, this move positions him as an omniscient interpreter and Himachalis as unwitting and unseeing victims of modernity's refashioning of their culture and subjectivities.

Elmore's analysis is ultimately unsatisfying, perhaps chiefly because he does not sufficiently distinguish among a set of related but not identical questions: How is emergent Himachali religion like or unlike other religion? What is the relationship between the formation of the category of religion and the production of Himachali religion? Is he primarily concerned to train our attention on Himachali *religion* or *Himachali* religion, and what difference would those distinct foci have on his analysis? The author's uneven and sometimes idiosyncratic treatment of his subject matter is finally underscored by a mystifying disavowal of any intent at all: "this book has nothing to teach. It does not offer any theory to abstract and test. It is not a collection of facts to be archived" (236). Presumably bowing to convention, at the very end "Becoming Religious" offers us just a few pages of acknowledgement of a scholarly history in which his study might fall. A more robust engagement with theory and the scholarly literature on the Himalayas might have clarified some of those questions. The book's brief conclusion reads as an invocation of influences more than a critical elaboration of his project. What Elmore claims to give us instead is a "style of interrogation" (239) or even a "listening in the manner [of] Krishnamurti" (236). In very many respects, this is an astute and perceptive treatment of modern Himalayan religion, yet its disorienting asides and never-thorough engagement with the scholarly literature leave this reader wishing for a little more care and rigor.

Brian K. Pennington

Fantaw, Setargew Kenaw: Technology-Culture Dialogue. Cultural and Sociotechnical Appropriation of Mobile Phones in Ethiopia. Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2016. 172 pp. ISBN 978-3-643-90739-4. (Beiträge zur Afrikaforschung, 71). Price: € 29,95

This book, which is based on a PhD dissertation conducted at the University of Bayreuth, deals with a highly relevant but also ambivalent topic. A the global scale, 5 billion people were using mobile phones in 2017, making mobile telecommunications one of the most widely diffused technologies on the planet. Despite this ubiquity, there is no general agreement about the appropriate evaluation of this new technology. Does this form of global communication provide the possibility of unlimited access to information for everyone? Or, are we victims of an instrument of total surveillance, and, as a consequence do we have become slaves to an ever greater acceleration of communication?

The author of the publication is careful enough not to rush to one side or the other. His concern is to describe the embedding of use and evaluation of mobile phones in Ethiopia in the local cultural practices and the local tradition of dealing with technology. He neither condemns mobile phones, nor does he appraise them as the key to a better future. On a more general level, his important and commendable work is a substantial contribution to better understand the cultural diversity in the context of globally diffused technologies.

In order to emphasize the specificity of the local practices with regard to the handling of mobile phones, the conceptual framework for this study refers to two concepts: appropriation and SCoT (= Social Construction of Technology). While cultural appropriation is a useful guideline to study the micro-level, SCoT sensitizes to the level of the society and the different groups within with regard to their evaluation of the technology. The author tends towards a very open definition of appropriation, using, for example, domestication and translation as synonyms. All three concepts are widely used in cultural anthropology. Although slightly different in their focus, they have in common to avoid a one-sided presentation of only the benefits or only the disadvantages. It is up to the reader, whether she or he accepts the author's suggestion to consider the local embedding of mobile phones as a dialogue between technology and culture.

Nevertheless, the author's basic argument that society is not the "passive-receiving side," and that technology is not the "driving force" of change is quite convincing. Beyond such dichotomies, however, we should keep in mind that the metaphor of dialogue includes the eventually unequal position of the participants, and the difference with regard to express themselves (157). The author, referring to Schleiermacher, rightly points out that there are two options in each translation: one can translate in such a way that the outcome is as close as possible to the original language, or one can design a translation that as much as possible fits in the contexts of the target language (9).

Among the quite enriching facets of the book is the embedding of the mobile phone in a broader, but not detailed, technology history of Ethiopia (chap. 2). The reader learns about the first fixed-line telephone (in 1890), the first freshwater pipe (1894), the opening of the Addis–Djibouti railway line (1917), and the arrival of the first two aircrafts in Addis (1929). The author refers to this broad range of historical experiences with innovation in order to highlight the general openness of the Ethiopian society toward new technologies. Through his more detailed observations, the reader learns about the high appreciation of the transistor radio, to which many people have listened so devotedly for decades. One might consider this attitude as a direct forerunner of the mobile phone, which now receives a comparable, if not greater attention.

Due to a lack of subscribers, the arrival of mobile phones in Ethiopia in April 1999 initially did not promise a good start. Twelve years later, at the time of the author's doctoral research in Ethiopia, however, this technology is so widespread that it is difficult for younger people to imagine a life without them. This is the result of several focus group discussions carried out by the author at two universities in Ethiopia (chap. 3). An important difference to usage patterns is the willingness to share, i.e., to lend

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