

bezirk (*kabupaten*) innerhalb Westtimors, der wiederum in drei Subdistrikte (*kecamatan*) unterteilt ist. Das Terrain ist an der Küste flach und erlaubt Nassreisianbau, das Landesinnere weist mehrheitlich schlechte Böden und Bodenerosion auf und ist daher für die landwirtschaftliche Nutzung nur bedingt geeignet. Obwohl das gesamte Gebiet in den Strukturen seiner Verwaltung den sonst in Indonesien üblichen Vorgaben folgt, gibt es einen *raja*, der als traditioneller Landbesitzer und lokale Entscheidungsgewalt eine zentrale Position einnimmt. Dieser *raja* zeichnet auch in der Vergangenheit für die Verteilung von Land verantwortlich, welches sogenannten Namensgruppen zugeteilt wurde. Die identifikatorische Bedeutung der traditionellen historischen Zuteilungen ist groß und die damit entstandenen Eigentumsverhältnisse sind Orientierungsmaßstab für die einheimische Bevölkerung. Neonbasu gibt umfangreiches Zahlenmaterial über die Rahmenbedingungen an: Sein Untersuchungsgebiet bestand aus 37 Dörfern mit knapp 41.000 Menschen. Weiters bezieht er sich auf die bisher zu dieser Gruppe erschienenen wissenschaftlichen Werke und kommt zum Schluss, dass bisher über die Biboki sehr wenig bis gar nichts existiert. Neonbasu betont, dass der bekannte Timor-Forscher H. G. Schulte-Nordholt die Biboki zwar erwähnt, aber diese von einer Außensicht ohne Kenntnis näherer innerer Zusammenhänge beschreibt. Neonbasu versucht daher schon aus diesem Grund, möglichst viele Lebensbereiche der Biboki auszuleuchten und zu thematisieren. Die Kapiteleinteilung folgt zentralen Aspekten des Lebens in der Biboki-Gesellschaft. Nach einer umfangreichen Ein- und Hinleitung folgen in Kapitel 2 die Beschreibung der Rahmenbedingungen vor Ort. Kapitel 3 widmet sich Oraltraditionen in theoretischer Weise, in Kapitel 4 werden Lebenskonzepte und die Idee des Ursprungs der Biboki-Gesellschaft anhand der Darstellung von Erzählungen, Mythen und Legenden dargestellt. Das fünfte Kapitel widmet sich einem speziellen Ort namens Tamkesi, dem für die Identität der Menschen und die Durchführung von Ritualen eine besondere Bedeutung zukommt. Kapitel 6 wiederum fokussiert auf das Haus, das eigene Anwesen sowie Familiengrundstücke als Orte der Verortung. Kapitel 7 nimmt sich der Bedeutung der Namen insgesamt in der Biboki-Gesellschaft an, um diese Aspekte mit der grundsätzlichen hohen Bedeutung des Hauses sowie des Materials Stein zu verknüpfen. Kapitel 9 greift dann verschiedene Aspekte des sozialen Lebens auf und hebt hier insbesondere die Hochzeit in ihren speziellen Bedeutungskontexten hervor. Das zehnte Kapitel schließlich bietet eine Zusammenfassung mit interpretativen Schlussfolgerungen. Die Arbeit setzt mehrere Schwerpunkte: einerseits basiert sie auf linguistischen Analysen und baut daher folgerichtig auf sprachwissenschaftlichen Konzepten auf, andererseits ist das Werk klar vom sogenannten "spatial turn" inspiriert: *space* und *place* spielen eine zentrale Rolle und so werden heilige und profane Orte in ihren Bedeutungszusammenhängen elaboriert erklärt; weiters spielt der Symbolismus bei der Interpretation von Orten und Praktiken eine Rolle. Das vorliegende Buch ist sehr umfassend; elf Skizzen, fünf Karten, zwölf Bilder, siebzehn Tabellen, ein umfangrei-

cher Anhang mit Texten sowie eine äußerst solide und detaillierte Bibliografie zeichnen dieses Buch aus. Das in englischer Sprache verfasste und leicht lesbare Werk ist schon allein dadurch eine substantielle Bereicherung für die kultur- und sozialanthropologische Forschung der Insel Timor. Die gute Kenntnis der lokalen Gegebenheiten durch den Autor muss insgesamt als Vorteil gesehen werden, denn er kann dadurch viele Dinge aus dem lokalen Wissen heraus regional und überregional kontextualisieren, sodass diese nicht "in der Luft hängen bleiben". Das Buch kann absolut zum Kauf empfohlen werden.

Hermann Mückler

Obi Oguejiofor, Josephat, and Tobias Wendl (eds.):

Exploring the Occult and Paranormal in West Africa. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2012. 262 pp. ISBN 978-3-643-90183-5. (Afrikanische Studien – African Studies, 47) Price: € 29.90

The key argument of this edited collection asks why the occult and paranormal have not disappeared in West Africa under the colonising influence of Christianity. The editors suggest that charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity, with their strong emphasis upon the devil and evil, have contributed to occult and paranormal discourses increasing rather than diminishing over the last twenty years. The contributors to the collection, therefore, seek to study "the consciousness of the occult and paranormal" in West Africa (xi). However, in doing so, some contributing authors equate occultism to superstitious belief which proves resistant to "modern" ideas. This is to ignore recent anthropological theorising where the association of witchcraft discourses in West Africa with "traditional" thought and "irrational" behaviour has been supplemented by the view that occult practices crystallise the experiences of the modern world. Indeed it could be strongly argued that modernity has injected occult narratives with a new dynamic. Witchcraft beliefs have adapted to reflect, for example in Ghana, conflicts in the capitalist economy. Witchcraft fears, in particular, have become a symptom of the ways in which the values attributed to capitalist accumulation and production generates friction in local moral economies. So West African witchcraft practices, rather than resistant to, are fully incorporated into the modernist project.

The association of occult beliefs with "traditional" rather than "modern" thought is most apparent in the chapter "Belief in the Paranormal and Occult. The Medical/Health Dimensions." The author writes how "[v]ulnerability to superstitious beliefs and practices are widespread in our culture, and consequently the adherence to traditional healing protocols ... irrespective of the high failure rates or advancements in science and technology" (108). She writes how only job opportunities and educational programmes will replace this "native" ideology (108). This argument, in my opinion, fails to recognise how West African occult narratives, via the African diaspora, are fully integrated into the socioeconomic agenda of developing and neoliberal economies. Indeed, paranormal beliefs are highly sophisticated cosmologies

that morally critique the key ethos of capitalist nations: namely the defining social value placed upon consumption and commoditisation. The allure of wealth and desire produced from nothing reached its pinnacle in the global economy. The widely used phrase “occult economy” captures this zeitgeist where in Johannesburg, lacking the resources to draw upon the celebratory discourses of neoliberalism that everyone would be set free to speculate and accumulate, to consume and indulge repressed desires, individuals turn instead to the mystical – zombie cannibals, werewolves, and witchcraft – to protect themselves from imagined enemies and to achieve wealth beyond their dreams.

In relation to the global economy, Oduwole in a chapter entitled “The Relevance of Occult and Paranormal Phenomenon in West Africa in the Era of Globalisation” argues that occult phenomena do not contribute to the goals of globalisation at all. Witchcraft is seen as a threat to communal life (125). He asks, “[W]hat is the sense of hanging on to a belief that leads to pain rather than pleasure” (125)? He looks at measures to reduce and if possible eradicate occult beliefs in society and refers to a poverty of the mind among people looking for extraordinary means of achieving wealth and prosperity. Rapidly adapting cosmopolitan ideas, morals and values about the occult become ahistorical universal beliefs “existing in all ages, cultures and civilizations” (3). Witchcraft beliefs, which are firmly rooted in dynamic social relationships become simply popular beliefs whose verification cannot be tested as beliefs, Oduwole argues, and are believed as soon as they are proclaimed (115). Bere, and Osei, however, provide a counter to such Eurocentric paradigms of investigation by trying to deconstruct the “logic” of Western rationality and the racist assumptions underpinning colonial and postcolonial education in West Africa. Likewise, Agbakoba looks at the occult in relation to Igbo language and cultural setting. He follows the words *amosu* loosely translated as witch and the related words *ammagba* translated as witchcraft. He argues that “the traditional” worldview is voluntaristic and vitalist and examines how new forms of rituals are required to harness and channel psychic energies and mental states in the modern setting (31).

Harnischfeger also provides a very interesting account about the crusade of the prophetess Ngozi in Nsukka, Nigeria. Interestingly, her crusade is against the very purveyors of so-called traditional religion – sorcerers, witches, and shrine-priests – whom many would see as her allies. Indeed, Ngozi sees herself as a moderniser engaged in a spiritual battle with evil, stepping into the gap left in Alor Uno by the Nigerian state which has lost, it is claimed, all legitimacy (230). Indeed, Harnischfeger provides a fine case for arguing that the multicultural diversity found in Nigeria means that there is no universally accepted way of dealing with evil. A good epitaph, indeed, for dealing with fear and anxiety in the global economy where Asiegbu, in the final chapter, concludes that an ultimate explanation for occult beliefs is always open-ended.

Jane Parish

Olúpòṅà, Jacob K.: *City of 201 Gods. Ilé-Ifè in Time, Space, and the Imagination.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. 334 pp. ISBN 978-0-520-26556-1. Price: £ 19.95

Ifè or Ilé-Ifè is the cultural centre of Yorubaland and beyond and it is certainly one of the most remarkable ancient cities of sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, judging from the available publications, up till now the city has aroused little scholarly endeavour. Apart from articles and pamphlets on various aspects of its culture, the interested reader can rely on only two comprehensive publications: a thin but solid monograph on the culture of Ilé-Ifè by the American anthropologist William Bascom (*The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria.* New York 1969), and a more extensive book on the sculptures of the town, their dating and the historical traditions of Ilé-Ifè by the British archaeologist Frank Willett (*Ife in the History of West African Sculpture.* London 1967). In comparison with the extensive recent writings on Timbuktu, the other great religious centre of West Africa, the body of available publications is meagre. Even more striking is the unbalance in the coverage of the two cities in the Wikipedia. In August 2012, Ilé-Ifè was described in 2,000 words, and Timbuktu in 12,000 words in the English-speaking edition. The respective fame of the two cities can also be gauged from the number of articles devoted to them in Wikipedia worldwide at the same time – Ilé-Ifè being dealt with in 21 languages and Timbuktu in 69. This surprising disparity seems to be mainly due to the lack of publications, rather than to the lack of scholarly interest.

Holding since 2006 a professorship for African traditional religions at Harvard University, Jacob Olúpòṅà is in an excellent position to promote research on Ilé-Ifè. As the son of a prominent Anglican priest, as a former lecturer at the University of Ilé-Ifè and as a holder of several American research grants, he was able to conduct his research in the town in favourable conditions on a long-term basis from 1989 to 2004. However, on account of his well-known Christian loyalties he was denied initiation into the Qbàtálá cult group – and presumably into others as well – so that he was refused access to valuable in-depth information only available to people after initiation (157). Yet, since most aspects of the traditional religion in the town are open to a wider public, a native Yorùbá and speaker of the language automatically has access to many relevant items of information as soon as he credibly conveys the impression of his general sympathy for the *òrìṣà* cults – the cults of the proverbial 201 deities of the city. Having worked on the traditional cults of Ilé-Ifè with similar research interests since the year 2000, the present reviewer wishes to set the book into perspective by pointing out its special focus, its positive aspects, and its shortcomings. Hopefully, the following remarks will contribute to promote further research on the most relevant aspects of the quickly disappearing great traditional civilization of the Yorùbá.

As a whole, the book provides a comprehensive survey of the main festivals of Ilé-Ifè, it attracts attention to the danger presented by the forces of change in undermining the traditional order of the town and the palace,