

of objectivity: “the anthropologist, *like the native*, is an agent” (37). At the same time the often seen tendency to reify (and deify) is severely attacked. With Geertz symbols are seen as vehicles for a conception, and hence the toolmaker’s perspective is taken up again. The author spots reification in most of the discourse analyses as well, and pleads for a reintroduction of the person in anthropology. The examples of so-called “Japanese Brazilians,” which appear time and again in the ethnographic parts of the book do the job here: regardless of discourses and of sociological analysis these subjects exemplify the personal aspects of identity formation since they are neither here nor there (Japan or Brazil) and present their personal mix as a perspective on life. The metropolis does not help us either for filling in an identity here. Both Simmel and Jameson are refuted as forms of intellectualism. The general proposal reads that modern human beings in the global predicament are not the product of but rather are “‘being thought’ by Culture and History” (74).

In Part II the political theory of Gramsci is of central concern. The fieldwork on a political process in a Brazilian town brings us abreast of the client system which persists through the introduction of the election format, and has us understand how political violence persists, regardless of the form of democratic free elections. Even when the mayor is violently chased from office, the client system persists and yields new and almost identical corruption and undemocratic leadership, called “Wild Power” by Linger. Culture filters, but allows for the system to continue through inertia. The detailed ethnographic report adds convincing evidence for the theoretical stand of the author.

In Part III identities are discussed as either discursive-symbolic constructs or mental features. Again the odd mixed persons offer provoking cases: Eduardo Mori is a Brazilian from Japanese descent, who returned to Japan. He lives there as the stranger he is for the common Japanese, with shifting identities. He is the product of history and culture, but also of personal agency. Which leads Linger to pose the central problem whether “Japanese Brazilian” can at all be a category. He states that this is “an uneasy, controversial question that threads through this entire book. How should an anthropologist conceive of and describe another human being?” (183). Linger closes the epistemological circle here and underlines with a thick line (my metaphor) the problem of adequate description of the person in the cultural being.

Having said so much the book ends in a very abrupt way with a short note against the notion of “Japanese in diaspora” (and maybe muslim, African, etc., in diaspora as well). The reader gets no summary, no conclusion, and is left in a sea of wondering. The ending is consistent with Linger’s position, I claim, but it is odd as an experience for the scholar.

The index and the bibliography are more than adequate. The language of the book is clear and adequate, which is not an easy thing given the philosophical meta-level of most of the argument.

I am convinced that the book will find a loyal readership and will earn itself a place in the university li-

braries. Philosophers of social science, anthropologists, and linguists should read this book and discuss about it. Specialists in migrant studies and the advocates of multiculturalism should take the book seriously, although I am convinced that other similar books will yet have to follow to change deeply rooted ideas on self and other, on culture and diaspora culture. Linger wrote a beautiful and courageous book on the human predicament of mixed identity, which will soon become or may already be the more general human predicament.

Rik Pinxten

Marsden, Magnus: *Living Islam. Muslim Religious Experience in Pakistan’s North-West Frontier.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 297 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-61765-9. Price: £ 17.99

Based on long-term research in Chitral, a region of the the Hindukush (northwest Pakistan), the author presents a synchronic anthropological study of the Khowar-speaking Kho (called “Chitralis” or “Chitral people” throughout the book). His focus is on the contemporary village life of this Muslim society. Marsden brilliantly explores the intellectual life in Chitral and questions issues like subjectivity, morality, education, as well as religious and spiritual authority. His main theoretical concern is with the commitment of the Kho to live intellectually independent, emotionally significant, and virtuous Muslim lives and how this interplay of faculties is conceptualised by the people. In this context, moral decision-making, debate, conflicts, critical spirit, principled reflection, and creativity have fundamental importance. Marsden offers refreshing views on Muslim village life enriched by vivid description. His style is very readable and never dry.

An important dimension of this monograph on “lived Islam” is the critical responsiveness of rural Muslims in Chitral to the teachings of revivalist and reformist movements of Sunni Islam. This is all the more to be highlighted because “... it remains widely assumed in both scholarly and more popular accounts that so-called ‘Islamic reformism’ is the dominant trend in the Muslim world today, and that this form of Muslim spirituality is above all else a rationalising force that leaves little or no space for emotion and experience” (241). The present study challenges current hostile stereotypes about Muslims who are often equated in the Western public not only with “fundamentalists,” but even with “terrorists.” But the author also compellingly challenges widely held academic stereotypes of unreflective village conformists who easily get into the grip of Islamic ideology. Thus, emphasis is laid “on the importance of recognising the capacity of Muslims to be critical and reflective of reform-oriented forms of global Islam” (255). In this regard, Marsden shows that the mystical traditions of Persian Sufi texts are still relevant in Chitral inspiring popular creative and aesthetic celebrations expressing joy of life.

The book is structured into eight chapters, six of them major ethnographic texts each containing an introduction, and rounded off by a conclusion. After the first introductory chapter drawing the study’s outline of analy-

sis, chapter 2 (“Rowshan: Chitral Village Life”) gives an overview of one of the two sites of fieldwork. Chapter 3 (“Emotions Upside Down: Affection and Islam in Present Day Rowshan”) insightfully explores the complexity of moral valuation, judgements, and conflicts depicting the area of Rowshan in upper Chitral as a contested moral space.

In chapter 4 (“The Play of the Mind: Debating Village Muslims”), the author analyses the complex of thought and discussion in village life, dimensions predominantly associated with men, but also powerfully influenced by women in view of the growing level of literacy and education. The next chapter entitled “*Mahfils* and Musicians: New Muslims in Markaz” is a very important one focusing on aesthetic visions of Muslim life, such as poetry, music, dance, joking, and comical impersonations, which contest puritanical versions of Islam through shere joy of life. In fact, Chitral has a distinct musical tradition renowned throughout the whole of northern Pakistan. Chapter 6 (“Scholars and Scoundrels: Rowshan’s Amulet-making *ulama*”) differentiates the often monodimensional views of rigid Islamic scholars and their alleged Taliban-style “brainwashing” in *madrasas* (religious schools). People in Chitral perceive the effects of this education ambivalently as a source of respect on the one hand, but also having the potential of “narrowing the mind” (177). This chapter also includes an insightful exploration into amulet-making by religious scholars which could have been enlivened by concrete examples of amulets written on paper (about their actual content, the way of folding the pieces of paper, etc.).

The last ethnographic chapter (“To Eat or Not to Eat? Ismailis and Sunnis in Rowshan”) deals with the multifaceted relations between both “doctrinal clusters” in Chitral, with their shared experiences as well as sometimes serious conflicts. Marsden shows that plural Muslim life and the drawing of distinct sectarian boundaries are problematic, needing constant striving, while at the same time creating anxieties in both communities. The cultural domains described and analysed in this study outline rural “lived Islam” in Chitral. They could have been supplemented by a further chapter on annual religious festivals. The book is rounded off by a lengthy conclusion (chapter 8) written in a self-confident style.

Although this is a laudable monograph offering new perspectives, I do have reservations. First, the geographical reference in the subtitle focusing on “Pakistan’s North-West Frontier” is no doubt politically correct (and also serving widespread interest in the colonial legacy of this well-known region among an English-speaking readership), but nevertheless misleading insofar as Chitral is part of a different cultural area, belonging namely to the Dards (see Karl Jettmar: Kafiren, Nuristani, Darden. Zur Klärung des Begriffssystems. *Anthropos* 77.1982: 254–263), a term strikingly nowhere mentioned in the book. As Marsden rightly points out, the political culture of Chitral considerably differs from the neighbouring tribal Pakhtun (13 f.). Nevertheless, beyond the context of Chitral, the author does not relate his work to the ethnography of neighbouring central Asian, respectively, northern

Pakistani ethnic groups, but to the broader Muslim world. Thus, what I miss is a discussion of comparable cultural traits in the Hindukush and Karakoram.

A quick statistical look at the author’s immense bibliography helps to shed some light on this desideratum: Out of the more than 500 entries only 38 deal with northern Pakistan in particular, only 20 are sources published before the year 1970, and there is only one title in the German language. Had Marsden consulted, for instance, Irmtraud Stellrecht’s comprehensive “Bibliography – Northern Pakistan” (Köln 1998), he would have found more than 400 entries concerning the area of Chitral alone. There is not even a general footnote reference to the long tradition of German, Danish, Austrian, and Italian scholarship in this region. Thus, important works, such as the masterful lifework of the doyen of Hindukush research, the late Karl Jettmar, “Die Religionen des Hindukusch” (Stuttgart 1975), which contains a long chapter on the religious traditions of the Kho (413–459), or Alberto and Augusto Cacopardo’s recently published “Gates of Peristan. History, Religion, and Society in the Hindu Kush” (Rome 2001), are ignored with bravado.

Jürgen Wasim Frembgen

Merry, Sally Engle: Human Rights and Gender Violence. Translating International Law into Local Justice. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006. 269 pp. ISBN 0-226-52074-9. Price: \$ 20.00

With its tradition of cultural relativism, even if that is more a methodological than an ethical position, anthropology has generally struggled with the powerful idea of the universality of human rights. If human rights are applicable, and identical, everywhere, where does this leave the concept of culture, so central to American anthropology at least? Merry shows that in the world of human rights commissions and NGOs, culture is generally seen as a barrier to human rights, either in its forms as “tradition” or as “national essence,” and mobilized by governments and local leaders to justify their maltreatment of women and other marginalized groups. More contemporary anthropological approaches to culture as contested, internally heterogeneous, and changing, even when change is phrased in the form of claims about what is traditional. Furthermore, transnational human rights elites neglect their own distinctive cultural practices, carefully studied by Merry in their own terrain of UN meeting rooms and conferences. As Merry states, a more dynamic perspective on culture “recognizes its capacity to innovate, appropriate, and create local practices. This understanding of culture challenges those who claim that reforms violate their culture at the same time as it encourages activists to take seriously meaning and practice within local contexts” (228).

This is an important book that should receive extensive attention. It moves beyond some of the classic conundrums around anthropological treatments of human rights by concentrating on the ways in which human rights are remade in the vernacular, translated into forms that can be understood locally, and resituated within