

Kampftechniken und ethischen Vorstellungen abweicht und Gleiches mit Gleichem erwidert, so dass es zu immer mehr Greuelthaten und zu einer Radikalisierung auf beiden Seiten kam, wobei extreme Maßnahmen immer häufiger durch die "Natur" der Gegner erklärt wurden. Dieser Artikel ist sowohl historisch wie auch anthropologisch und psychologisch von Interesse, da es sich um ein gut dokumentiertes historisches Beispiel handelt.

Abschließend lässt sich sagen, dass vorliegendes Buch – wohl in Anbetracht der Persönlichkeit des Jubilars – eindeutig in der französischen Tradition der Ethnologie verankert ist. In einer sich immer stärker angleichenden globalisierten Welt des Denkens wird demonstriert, dass es immer noch eine solche Tradition gibt und dass sie sehr lebhaft und viel versprechend ist. Das Lesen mancher Beiträge kann sich bisweilen als sehr mühsam erweisen, da sie viele ethnografische und historische Hinweise enthalten und die Beispiele durchwegs aus Afrika südlich der Sahara stammen, die meisten aus Burkina Faso oder benachbarten Ländern. Aber zugleich weisen die meisten Beiträge darüber hinaus, und der Erkenntnisgewinn ist auf jeden Fall gegeben, da fast immer von konkreten Forschungstätigkeiten und von weiterführenden Überlegungen ausgegangen wird.

Marie-France Chevron

Datta, Birendranath: *Cultural Contours of North-East India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012. 255 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-807557-8. Price: £ 27.50

The collection of articles presented by Birendranath Datta in this volume comprises more than thirty years of advocating his main concern: To promote the cultural richness of his home region, Northeast India, to folklorists and general academia in India. The regret he formulated already decades ago, that Northeast India is a widely neglected and misunderstood cultural region in academia in general, is surely still true to a large extent today. Well aware that his work is limited to mainly the analysis of manuscripts, oral traditions, and, to a much lesser extent, performative traditions of Assam and Manipur, we can agree with him that there is an enormous potential still untouched as regards research about Northeast India as a whole.

The assembled essays and speeches in this volume, most of which have been published before in Indian magazines and journals, are structured following a principle of proceeding from the general to the specific. Although somewhat repetitive at times – a fact the author is well aware of – they present a well guided introduction into some hardly covered themes of the folklore of Assam and Manipur. The first part titled "The Concept and the Perspective" is mainly an appeal to document and compare oral traditions, written traditions, and the performing arts on an in-depth and large-scale basis, and use this material to sketch a new understanding of a cultural history of Northeast India – a region which he sees as decidedly unique but not unlinked from the rest of India. Here, a major concern of the author is to emphasize the importance and meaningfulness of oral traditions and folk-

tales in this endeavor. He gives several examples of such sources and how they can be fruitfully used for the purpose. In the second part, "Tradition and Change," this objective is intensified by choosing a few examples with which the interlinkage between "tribal" and "non-tribal" mutual influences can be shown. The distinction between the two categories more or less overlaps with the notion of hill and plains people, or of "sanskritized" (i.e., hinduized) and "non-sanskritized" groups – at times of the same ethnic groups that might have split with one part of the group remaining living in the hills, the other settling in the plains. As examples of narrative traditions for the comparison the author chooses tales and legends that are linked to the Ramayana epic. Part 3 is called "Pan-Indian Connections" and looks into the stories presented before with more detail and with a historical embedding as to how the Ramayana has reached the region: via the neo-Vaishnav Bhakti movement in the person of Sankaradeva in the middle of the 16th century. Datta accredits the success of the spreading of the Ramayana story to the movement and especially to the personality and teachings of Sankaradeva. Confronted with this religiously nonorthodox spiritual leader, who rejected the cast system and hierarchy in general, many tribal groups, getting into contacts with the movement in the plains of Assam, found it easy to adapt the Ramayana story, which Sankaradeva had translated to Assamese and infused with local concepts, and to melt it into their own oral traditions of tragic love. The last part, "Performing and Visual Art," seems not to fit as neatly into the overall concept of the book. While the chapter about performing art ties up with the thoughts about the Ramayana stories, the two chapters about arts and crafts and manuscript painting seem to stand somewhat isolated.

One of the main strengths of Datta's volume can be found in his focus on the value of oral traditions and the richness of song texts. Being a renowned local folk singer himself, his love for the tradition, and his passion for firsthand field research shines through in all of his articles. Therefore, some of the material presented in the volume consists of his primary research data. Many examples of recitations and songs are presented, among which the Karbi and Mizo stories are given special attention. However, in the run of the book the reader might, despite several short warnings by the author, get the impression that the Northeast of India is generally strongly influenced by Hinduism, especially of the neo-Vaishnav movement. What also remains as a take home message is the notion that the Northeast of India is extremely open and tolerant towards all types of ideologies, which the author accredits to this movement and especially its protagonist Sankaradeva, and by this generally blending out all armed nationalist, ethnic and religious conflicts of the past century. Further, reading Datta's account one might be left to believe that cultural syncretism in Northeast India is mainly consisting of locally favored Ramayana stories enriched by older oral traditions and artistic expressions. This might be partly the case for the today's states of Assam and Manipur. But I severely doubt that the many hill tribes repeatedly mentioned at the side in the volume –

in Nagaland, Arunachal, Meghalaya, Tripura, and other regions – would feel genuinely represented by this notion of “cultural contours of North-East India.” Many of the hill tribes traditionally have nothing whatsoever to do with Hinduism, the Ramayana, or a manuscript tradition. The fact, that they might have become influenced lately by Hindu mythology, has more to do with recent TV and Bollywood exposure than with a deep integration of Hindu tradition and believe. From this perspective, it might have been advisable to choose the main title of the book with more modesty, restricting it to its real contents. However, reading carefully one can notice in many small side notes that the author is well aware of this circumstance. Musing about why he nevertheless chose this all-encompassing title, one can find an answer in his openly declared agenda. In my opinion, it is not so much a bias of his own person or provenience that might have lead him to this decision (a reproach that tends to be made quickly among local scholars), but the wish to pitch the region and its traditions as a whole to the mainstream Indian (folklorist) academia by choosing a topic that appeals to them and lure them into getting interested in looking closer. Thus, he, for instance, writes in his preface: “If this volume in any manner helps in drawing the attention of scholars and policymakers to the importance of the cultural treasures that North-east India has in its possession, I shall consider my efforts to be amply rewarded.” Or, in other words in the introduction: “For the last four decades or so, it has been my ardent endeavor to prepare the right kind of atmosphere in the academic and intellectual circles – both within and outside this region – so that Northeast India’s legitimate claim for attention and recognition does not go unheeded. The pieces that have been selected for inclusion in the present volume represent periodical outcomes of the endeavor that still continues.” Thus, rather than objecting to a quite obvious missing of representativity facing the title of the book, I would like to acknowledge Datta’s efforts as an advocate for a still fairly underrepresented region in academia and science in general. While “Cultural Contours of North-East India” seems to be a compilation especially designed for the Indian intellectual readership, it also provides valuable data for the international academia, mainly through the English summaries and partial translations of oral accounts and manuscripts from languages of the region that might not be so easily accessible otherwise.

Marion Wettstein

Descola, Philippe : Claude Lévi-Strauss, un parcours dans le siècle. Paris : Odile Jacob, 2012. 302 pp. ISBN 978-2-7381-2362-6. Prix : € 24,90

Este libro se suma a los varios homenajes a Claude Lévi-Strauss publicados recientemente. Reúne a una docena de autores, muchos de ellos de gran renombre para el gremio de antropólogos, y de alguna manera relacionados con Lévi-Strauss. Cabe notar, desde un inicio, que solo dos de las once contribuciones compiladas por Philippe Descola, tienen como autor a un americanista. Por tanto, la mayoría de los autores han dedicado más bien sus esfuerzos a la comprensión de sociedades no americanas.

La compilación es concisamente presentada por Philippe Descola. A continuación, la primera de las seis breves partes en las que se divide el libro incluye precisamente a los dos únicos americanistas (aparte de Descola). La primera es Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, quien indaga en la naturaleza de un “difusionismo sui generis” en la obra de Lévi-Strauss. Considerando que este difusionismo “no constituye nunca un principio de explicación”, ni tampoco “postula ... el origen o la dirección de los préstamos”; uno no deja de cuestionarse si no hubiera sido mejor hablar, por ejemplo, de “comparatismo”. Aunque el otro trabajo de esta primera sección, de Marie Mauzé, ofrece algunas constataciones relevantes, se detiene, las más de las veces, en ciertas anécdotas biográficas. Habría sido quizá más pertinente discutir, por ejemplo, las distintas formas de *enquêtes* de Lévi-Strauss, al momento de distinguir entre sus aproximaciones a América del norte y del sur.

Los artículos reunidos en la segunda parte del libro, titulada “Du local au global”, están dedicados al parentesco en una región de África y a las perspectivas que animan algunos estudios siberianos. No parece, pues, haber una relación tan fuerte entre ambos. En cuanto al trabajo del gran antropólogo belga De Heusch, cabe notar que sea probablemente el último que publicara en vida. Aquí, De Heusch, continua, haciendo referencia a Lévi-Strauss, un debate sobre un tema anteriormente tratado por el, que considera, no solo irresuelto, sino descuidado por las nuevas generaciones de etnólogos. El otro trabajo de esta segunda parte, de Roberte N. Hamayon es un sumario de los estudios de sociedades siberianas realizados por algunos autores vinculados a Lévi-Strauss. Quizá su aspecto más interesante sea sus noticias sobre el estado de la etnografía en la Unión Soviética. En efecto, según Hamayon, la descripción etnográfica adquirió un papel eminentemente político y algunos temas, como el parentesco, se volvieron prácticamente inabordables en un trabajo de campo. Sea como fuere, para la década de 1930, habría imperado una literatura de propaganda ateísta. Esta ofrece etnografías de gran interés, precisamente por su afán de identificar algo que debe ser extirpado. Resulta difícil no pensar aquí en algunas de las descripciones, hechas por misioneros y religiosos del siglo XVI, sobre la religión de los pueblos andinos. Motivos radicalmente opuestos reúne, en unos mismos métodos, a los sacerdotes del siglo XVI y los ateos del siglo XX.

La tercera parte del libro se inicia con un trabajo de Françoise Héritier dedicado al parentesco. Con una claridad notable, el trabajo se estructura en torno a tres preguntas sucesivas. Héritier sugiere que “las estructuras complejas pueden obedecer a leyes o a regularidades cuyos mecanismos son los mismos que los de aquellos de las estructuras elementales”; y concluye preguntándose por qué estos mecanismos tendrían tal necesidad de ser, y a qué profundidades de las necesidades humanas podrían corresponder. Ambas consideraciones se enlazan con la segunda cuestión, en la que Héritier enfatiza la relación entre la prohibición del incesto y lo que ella considera una cuestión esencial para toda forma de humanidad: la forma en que se constituyen las sustancias mismas del cuerpo y