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## Rezensionen – Comptes rendus – Reviews

## Recent textbooks on religions in South Asia

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1. **Mittal, Sushil / Thursby, Gene (eds.):** *Religions of South Asia: An Introduction*. London/New York: Routledge, 2006, 259 pp., ISBN 978-0-41544-851-2.
2. **Clothey, Fred W:** *Religion in India: A Historical Introduction*. London / New York: Routledge, 2007, 282 pp., ISBN 978-0-41594-023-8.
3. **Suthren Hirst, Jacqueline / Zavos, John:** *Religious Traditions in Modern South Asia*. London/New York: Routledge, 2011, 319 pp., ISBN 978-0-41544-787-4.
4. **Pechilis, Karen / Raj, Selva J.:** *South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today*. London/New York: Routledge, 2013, 259 pp., ISBN 978-0-41544-851-2.

In the span of seven years, Routledge has provided us with four introductory guides to the study of South Asian religions with very similar sounding titles, all addressing an undergraduate audience. A few reasons can explain the multiplication of such textbooks: (1) on a commercial level, it signals a niche of particular interest for the publishing house: the audience is both academic and not too specialized, and it is hoped that university libraries will systematically acquire the books and instructors require them as compulsory readings; (2) on the level of content, there is a need in updating decades of scholarship that come out of a critique of “Orientalist” approaches in the study of religions in South Asia. In this light, older textbooks appear antiquated and methodologically problematic in a number of their assumptions and choices – such as their focus on “Hindu” traditions, an elitist bias privileging brahmanical sources, or a devaluation of the “medieval” period in relation to the “ancient” or “classical” world etc.; (3) on a pedagogical and institutional level, the renewed interest in South Asian religions relates to institutional changes and the reshaping of programs in American and European universities: specialists in South Asian studies are now often teaching classes that cover a broad spectrum of South Asian religions in both ancient and contemporary periods, and this requires textbooks that are concurrently specialized enough and adapted to this wide audience.



Keeping those elements in mind, I will deal with the four titles in chronological order of their publication and will devote slightly more attention to *Religious Traditions in Modern South Asia (RTMSA)*, because it is certainly the most original among the four. The first, *Religions of South India (RSA)*, is a collective work edited by Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby. A cultural anthropologist, Mittal teaches at the James Madison University (Virginia) and has authored (among others): *The Hindu World* (with G. Thursby), 2004. Thursby is working at the University of Florida and has published works on Sikhism (*The Sikhs*, 1992). *RSA* is divided into two parts (religions indigenous to India and imported religions) and nine chapters, corresponding to as many religions. The organization of the book according to discrete religions has advantages and disadvantages: it allows an in-depth coverage of different religions by contributors who are themselves often profiled as specialists of one religion, and it gives an immediate sense of diversity. Concurrently, it presents the inconvenience of relying on categories in “-isms” (Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism ...) that do not find straightforward correspondents in various South Asian idioms. As such, it could give the artificial impression that those religions are well defined by specific texts, beliefs and practices, and do not overlap with each other. Similarly, one could wonder what counts as “religion”: why for example to deal with Sikhism and not with Ādivāsi or Sant “religion”? The editors are aware of those issues, but choose not to engage them directly, in what is probably a pragmatic way to connect with the conceptual framework of intended readers. Similarly, the editors use interchangeably the terms of “religion” and “faith”, showing that the need to problematize those loaded categories (part of academic routine in the study of religion since Talal Asad and Jonathan Z. Smith) is not felt particularly acutely in this context.

The essays are structured along roughly similar lines: a historical summary followed by a survey of texts, practices, social issues, modern expressions and transmission outside of India. In a way that is perhaps revelatory, certain contributions deal selectively with those points (e.g. the contribution on Buddhism, which has no section on rituals). The chapters are well informed, and the impression that religions developed independently is somewhat counterbalanced by an attention to the relations with other religions. The pedagogical apparatus is, though, kept to a bare minimum: the chapters provide a short list of additional references, but there is neither a glossary nor questions for class discussion. The book addresses methodological issues with an *ad hoc* chapter on postcolonial theory by Carol Olson (himself the author of yet another Routledge guide for undergraduates, *Religious Studies: Key Concepts*, 2011). The chapter unfortunately remains quite disconnected from previous ones, and a few more recent references, as well as a more precise rendering of some of the authors’ thoughts, would have been helpful (e.g. J. Z. Smith who allegedly would like to “limit the use of



comparison to cultural items that are spatially and temporally contiguous”, p. 273).

The book by Fred Clothey, Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, *Religion in India (RI)* is organized entirely chronologically. It opens on the “sources of Indian religion” and continues on to contemporary times, with chapters that are not organized around one or several religions but around periods: “the urban period”, “the post-classical period”, “the coming of Islam”, etc. A short introductory chapter addresses the question of perspectives and historiographical models, and reflects on the concept of religion – in a quite basic way (C. Geertz and R. Otto are introduced as prominent “Western theorists” of religion). While even under 300 pages, the book manages a detailed and diverse picture of the history of South Asian religions (dealing with both Northern and Southern traditions, Sanskrit and vernacular sources, elitist and popular worldviews, male and female practices etc.). With concepts and practices historicized rigorously, the reader gets a good impression of the traditions’ dynamism and complexity, with an attention to processes of reinterpretation, multiple uses of similar material, etc. (seen, for example, in the presentation of devotional currents or Indian “responses” to “streams from the West”). A caveat to this approach is, of course, that some elements are excessively difficult to date and that periodization and genealogies are always open to debate. One could also ask about the specificity of the religious issues in this historical narrative, especially if contrasted with more general historical accounts of India, such as H. Kulke and D. Rothermund’s *A History of India* (1986). However, even if not too theoretically minded, the book does an excellent job of presenting a clear yet not oversimplified picture that also conveys a comprehensive understanding of its topic. It preserves, as much as possible, concepts in their original language (with diacritics) and each chapter provides the students with a long list of well-chosen references, along with a large number of maps, timelines, and a detailed glossary.

Authored by Jacqueline Suthren Hirst and John Zavos, *Religious Traditions in Modern South Asia* is the most innovative in its structure and content. Hirst teaches at the University of Manchester and has authored, among others, works on Vedānta (*Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta: a Way of Teaching* (2005)) and pedagogical issues in the teaching of South Asian religions. Zavos teaches at the same university and is an historian specializing in nationalist movements in India (author of *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India* (2000)). *RTMSA* challenges textbooks that are informed by what they call a “world religions model”, explicitly naming *RSA* as such an example. While the editors of *RSA* think that students should first be acquainted with “prototypical” conceptions of religion in South Asia before developing their own criticism (p. xii), the authors of *RTMSA* would like to introduce immediately students to those issues. The title shows



some discomfort with the use of “religion”, replacing it by “traditions” – probably not a much less problematic category, but at least less directly marked by the “world religions model”. The originality of the book is immediately seen in its structure: key issues, not religions serve as chapter titles.

In the first part of the book, the main goal is to emphasize the diversity of religious practices in South Asian contexts, and in particular the inability of a normative concept of religion (marked by its Christian heritage) to account for actual cases. Thus, a chapter on deity opens on a text by Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833) in which three Chinese converts discuss with a missionary: the first says that he understood that there were three gods, the second two, and the third, no god at all. The story is used to fuel a critique of the opposition between monotheism and polytheism as a heuristic tool. Dealing then with the issue of texts, the authors invite the student to compare photographs of a traditional Vedic school and an English translation of an Upanishadic verse engraved on the Birla temple (New Delhi). This leads to a discussion of different uses and contexts of texts, and criticism of the view that religious texts would belong to one specific religion – an idea traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The chapter on “myth” surprises its reader by opening on the TV series *Ramayan* by Ramanand Sagar. Borrowing the definition of Bruce Lincoln (myth as ideology in narrative form), the authors insist that a single narrative (such as the *Rāmkaṭhā*) can be used in various socio-religious settings. For addressing the topics of ritual and worship, the authors propose a case study of Shah Nur’s (d. 1692) ‘urs celebration in Aurangabad, stressing that in this case and others, “people from ‘different’ religions frequently participate in the rituals of others” (p. 94). The issue of “caste” is handled in a specific chapter located across the two parts of the book, analyzed under the double lens of the diversity of practices and genealogies of its modern understandings. After distinguishing carefully categories such as *casta*, *varṇa* or *jāti*, the authors explore the modern evolution of the notion and its relation with issues of religion in the colonial period – roughly following the approach of N. Dirks (*Castes of Mind*). In the chapter dealing with “encounters with the West”, the authors introduce Said’s reflections on orientalism, resisting a perspective in which Indian elites would only “react” to Western impulses and emphasizing processes of interaction and creativity. As a sidenote, we might note here that – in large part due to his reliance on Foucault – Said might not be ideal for analyzing this type of process and other historiographical models could have been more helpful. The remaining chapters go however beyond a purely Saidian approach and examine the construction of religious boundaries and the conceptualization of private and public religious spaces, largely following H. Oberoi in his analysis of the construction of Sikhism as a religion in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (*The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, 2001).



The goal is to explore the effect of the “world religions model” on the “real” social world, with the last case study being Ayodhya and the Babri Masjid.

The book manages to introduce students to sophisticated topics and debates, conveying its message in relatively easy terms. For doing so, it uses an arsenal of pedagogical techniques: it addresses the reader in a “personal tone”, recommending attention to this or that issue while reading further; it multiplies examples and case studies; it provides occasionally “boxes” that explain key terms, questions for class discussion, tasks for the reader (e.g. reflecting and answering questions about a text), as well as rich lists of additional readings. This unorthodox way to deal with the topic, however, also has limits. An immediate issue is that it is not a comprehensive account of religions in South Asia – and by this standard, many elements would be missing (e.g. sacrificial traditions, classical texts, South Asian regions outside of India etc.). Moreover, one may wonder in which measure the textbook presupposes a certain acquaintance with debates in the field, since it opposes a number of conceptions that may go much beyond what the preconceptions of the intended readers will likely be.

The most recent textbook, *South Asian Religions (SAR)*, seeks to give an equal treatment to most religions of India, and the subtitle of the book, *Tradition and Today* (also the subtitle of all chapters) witnesses a concern with connecting socio-anthropological and historical perspectives for a better understanding. The editors are Selva Raj (1952–2008) and Karen Pechilis, both specialists of South India. Author of *Interpreting Devotion: The Poetry and Legacy of a Female Bhakti Saint of India* (2011), Pechilis teaches comparative religion at Drew University. The book brings together authors who are specialists of different religious traditions in South Asia and deals with them in chronological order of emergence. As in *RSA*, the division by religions brings both heuristic advantages and disadvantages. As Pechilis notes, such an approach encourages comparative thinking between different traditions. It also invites the reader to consider South Asian religions in a broader context of entangled or connected histories, by following the trajectories of religions – be it from the Middle East to India, or from India to China. At the same time, the same questions raised about *RSA* equally apply in this case. In her introduction, Pechilis is very aware of these issues and stresses that the goal is to depart from an elitist perception of religions, to focus on practice rather than texts or beliefs, and to account for the “cross-fertilization of multiple traditions” in India (p. 2). She further argues, along lines similar to *RTMSA*, “religions of South Asia [...] wrote a different script than the one with which students of European or Middle Eastern religions are familiar.” (p. 4). She adds “religions of South Asia might most fruitfully be studied as a pluralistic grouping in a geographical location, rather than as singular religions”. Whereas one could ask whether the division of the book along religions could not run against



this agenda, most contributions are as sensitive to the issue as the editors. The chapters are well informed and generally insist on the extreme diversity of a “tradition” (e.g. the variety of “Judaisms”) and the dimension of practice. The book finally includes questions for discussion, key concepts with their definition and a rich list of additional resources.

To conclude: *SAR* and *RSA* can be considered as standalone textbooks that provide comprehensive accounts of South Asian religions, accessible to an audience with no previous knowledge of the topic. Their chapters underline the aspect of diversity and acknowledge the major methodological issues of this study (more so *SAR* on this matter). *RTMSA* is conceived in a different way: it is based on the model of problem-based learning and directly engages the critical issues that characterize the study of (South Asian) religions. As such, it can hardly completely replace more classical textbooks, since it does not give (and does not want to give) the feeling of a comprehensive overview. It is, though, an excellent introduction to methodological issues in the study of South Asian religions – and even, I would say, in the study of religions in general for which much can be learned from the South Asian contexts. In the end, the choice also depends on the institutional setting: In a department where chairs are organized by competences in religions, then using both *RTMSA* and *RI* could be particularly appropriate, to encourage the students to think about their topics in an integrated and problematized way, while providing them with a rich historical picture of the subject. In a department where the focus is more on the history of South Asia, then a combination of *RTMSA* with *SAR* would help the students to think critically, while still discerning similar processes in different contexts and thus providing keys to comparison.

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**Fan, Chengda, translated by James M. Hargett.** *Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea: The Natural World and Material Culture of Twelfth-Century China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010. lxvi + 349 pp., ISBN 978-0-295-99079-8.

There is a rather large body of extant texts dating from premodern China often collectively referred to as “travel records” (*youji* 遊記). Although not a typical “travel record”, such as a day-trip essay or an embassy report, Fan Chengda’s 范成大 (1126–1193) *Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea* (*Guihai yuheng zhi* 桂海虞衡志; hereafter *Treatises*) shares much in common with other works of the genre, in particular as it comprises both passages outlining the landmarks, vegetation, and people of particular localities, and reportorial accounts on those areas’ customs and products. It is well known that Chinese “travel records” are extremely valuable as source works, mainly because they often contain detailed descriptions and lists of information – usually related to geographical and mythological matters – which are not found elsewhere. In this regard, the *Treatises* is no exception. In fact, it stands as the earliest extant and most detailed written record on China’s southwestern frontier. Comprised of 13 sections, each devoted to a particular category of objects, the book offers a wealth of geographical, historical, cultural, and ethnographical data about southwestern China – mainly Guangxi – in the twelfth century, ranging from landscape, minerals, flora and fauna to the history of various non-Han peoples and their cultures.

To most scholars whose research interests center around the Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279) in China, the *Treatises* is not a closed book. But with James M. Hargett’s meticulous yet lucid translation of the text, indeed the first completed and annotated translation published in any language, it is now doubtlessly accessible to a much broader readership. Professor Hargett has already established himself as a leading scholar in the fledgling field of studies in Chinese travel literature, and many of his publications deal with Fan Chengda, a renowned official and literatus of the Song. Together with his annotated translations of *Diary of Grasping the Carriage Reins* (*Lanpei lu* 攬轡錄), *Diary of Mounting a Simurgh* (*Canluan lu* 駢鸞錄), and *Diary of a Boat Trip to Wu* (*Wuchuan lu* 吳船錄), Hargett’s initial aim



to provide English readers with translations of all four of Fan's major prose works has now been accomplished.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to a complete annotated translation of Fan's original text, which makes up the predominant part of the book, Hargett also provides a substantial, comprehensive scholarly introduction that helps the reader to situate the *Treatises* in its historical and cultural context. In this introduction, three points are particularly important for our understanding of Fan's work. First, the methodological approach and contents of the *Treatises* show that it is not a conventional "travel record" but at once a gazetteer, an encyclopedia, and an ethnography. A copious amount of information on local conditions (as common in gazetteers) is organized into topical categories (as in encyclopedias), including an extensive one on "foreign peoples" which Fan collectively termed as *man* 蠻 (lit. barbarians) (typical for ethnographic texts). However, the relative lack of references to quotations and lore from literary tradition and Fan's clear notion that it was compiled for private rather than political-administrative purposes make it evident that the *Treatise* hardly resembles any of these three genres. Ultimately, Hargett concludes that it may be best to classify it as "a 'miscellany' or an example of Song dynasty *biji* [筆記, sometimes also translated as note literature] writing" (p. xxxix).

Second, the *Treatises* is not only "a personal memoir of Fan's happy and restful days in Guilin [in Guangxi]", but also "a serious and detailed scholarly study" which like many other "travel records" is extremely valuable as a source work (p. xxxvi). Fan was an experienced traveler as well as a keen observer, interested in reporting on local customs and affairs. He also distinguished between what he had seen or verified personally and what he had obtained indirectly from informants. Fan endeavored to report information and to relate these facts to potential readers who probably knew little or nothing about these matters. In doing so, he adopted a strict approach of only selecting those materials that are "not generally found in local gazetteers" (p. 4). For instance, in the introduction to the "Treatise on Flowers", Fan commented that he described "only those uniquely suited to local conditions [of Guangxi]" and that "none of those found in Northern Counties [other parts of China] will be noted" (pp. 89–90). Furthermore, unlike most of Tang 唐 (618–907) and Song officials who were sent to Guangxi for demotion or political exile, Fan did not harbor much fear or distress but was surprisingly enthusiastic about his assignment. His affection for Guilin and Guangxi is evidently

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<sup>1</sup> Translations of the first two diaries are included in Hargett 1989, while the translation of the third is presented, along with an excellent study, in Hargett 2008. Hargett's most recent work on Fan and his literary production is a complete translation of Fan's *Treatise on Mei-Flowers* (*Meipu* 梅譜) in Hargett 2010.



to be felt, as he expressed in the preface of the *Treatise* that during his time in Guilin he “found peace of mind there” (p. 3), and even after his tenure there, he still “remain[ed] deeply attached to Guilin, so much that [he has] compiled and edited this [collection] of minutia and trivia” (p. 4). The rigorous selectivity of materials and the neutral attitude of Fan towards his objects together make up for the exceptional value of the *Treatises*.

Third, and most important for a historian on Chinese border and ethnography like myself, Hargett also offers an insightful account on the expansion of the Han-Chinese and their conquest of the region of Guangxi, beginning with the Qin 秦 (221–207 B.C.) and Han 漢 (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) dynasties and extending to the Tang and Song. Hargett reveals how the Song endeavored to “maximize its control” in the southwestern border regions of the empire while “minimizing military conflict” with the large population of non-Han tribes-peoples residing there (p. xx). In contrast to the “standard” version of Chinese expansion in the history, according to which the Han-Chinese culture dominated, both militarily and politically, and the border people were either “marginalized” or “sinicized”, the *Treatises* tells a different story of the situation in the Song. The Song followed the practice of “loose rein”, known as “bridle and halter” (*jimi* 羈縻), to organize submissive tribal peoples (or peoples at least willing to submit themselves to the Chinese sovereign) into the Chinese administrative hierarchy, usually headed by local chieftains. These tribes-peoples were considered by the Han-Chinese as partially “sinicized”, yet more often than not their subordination existed only in name, as the chieftains still had near-absolute control over land distribution and tax collection within their jurisdictions. Thus when Fan Chengda arrived in Guangxi in 1173, he must have found himself in “a strange, alien land” (p. xxix) which was overwhelmingly populated by non-Han peoples who had not been assimilated into the orbit of Han-Chinese civilization. But Fan documented that he “refrained from ‘looking down on the [local] people’”, most of them probably non-Han, and “they in turn forgave my ignorance and trusted in my sincerity” (p. 3). One may surmise that this was not the case for most of Fan’s contemporaries.

The original text by Fan is not voluminous at all and it is written, as Hargett expounds, in a straightforward “reportorial-descriptive” language (p. xlvi). But thoroughly understanding, translating and annotating such a text requires a considerable amount of philological spadework. This is not only due to the sheer amount of topics the *Treatises* covers, but also because many of the technical terms, geographical names and local expressions that spread all over the text are usually not to be found in the standard dictionaries, encyclopedias and reference sources. But as a master of middle period classical Chinese, Hargett accomplished a truly admirable feat in meeting this daunting task by providing a felicitous and readable translation, buttressed with extensive annotations on the highly techni-



cal and descriptive terms. The reader will marvel at Hargett's erudition, since over 1100 footnotes, 409 of them alone in the last section, draw on an impressive array of both primary and secondary sources. Carefully chosen photos and illustrations provide visual references to the text. The University of Washington Press also deserves special commendation for its editing effort to produce an elegantly formatted and easy-to-use book: all footnotes are conveniently given at the bottom of each page; a complete version of the Chinese text is appended to the translation; an extensive glossary/index with original Chinese characters facilitates quick checking of terms.

This is an impressive book, despite occasional minor quibbles (e.g. on p. xxx, Fan was in fact dispatched in 1170 as a diplomatic envoy to the Zhongdu 中都 of the Jin 金 [1115–1234], not Dadu 大都, which only became the name of the principle capital of the Yuan 元 [1271–1368] a century later; on p. 163, Fan's original sentence which means "many settlement chieftains [...] purchased official ranks [from the Song], but [they got] only military ranks ranging from 9b to 8a" is erroneously translated as "they receive corn allowances and office appointments but only at the rank of senior or junior envoy"). James M. Hargett's conscientious translation and meticulous study of Fan Chengda's *Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea* represents the culmination of a labor of devotion and love. The book does a great service to enhance our knowledge and understanding of the natural world, material culture, and ethnography in China's southwestern frontier in the twelfth century. Such an indispensable book will definitely stimulate future researchers.

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Isay, Gad C. *The Philosophy of the View of Life in Modern Chinese Thought*, Wiesbaden : Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013, 114 pp., ISBN 978-3-447-06883-3.

With the publication of *The Philosophy of the View of Life in Modern Chinese Thought*, a work mainly focusing on the 1923–1924 controversy over Science and Metaphysics (*kexue yu xuanxue lunzhan* 科學與玄學論戰), Gad C. Isay returns to one of his first academic interests, offering a reviewed version of his PhD dissertation. Originally supervised by Irene Eber and defended at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2000, this work aims at clarifying “the philosophical issues inherent in the arguments heard in the past [concerning the problem of view of life (in German *Lebensanschauung*, in Chinese *renshengguan* 人生觀)<sup>1</sup>] and at establishing a framework for making these relevant to contemporary discussions” (p. 8). As far as the first ambition is concerned, Isay certainly succeeds; regarding contemporary discussions only the future will tell us.

Isay’s book is truly innovative in a field long dominated by studies focusing only on the scientist actors of the debate, i.e. Ding Wenjiang 丁文江 (1887–1936), Wu Zhihui 吳稚暉 (1865–1953), Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879–1942), and Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962)<sup>2</sup>. By Balancing this one-sided approach, Isay offers a very thorough presentation of the “metaphysics clique” (*xuanxue pai* 玄學派) including thinkers like Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (1877–1969), Zhang Dongsun 張東蓀 (1886–1973) or Lin Zaiping 林宰平 (1879–1960). As such, the work examined here can be considered as a part of a historiographical trend to “decenter the May Fourth Movement”<sup>3</sup>. In contrast to the old understanding of the May Fourth era as dominated by iconoclastic and scientist intellectuals, Isay shows that within the intellectual *milieu* of the time Chinese modernity was not solely considered in opposition to tradition. One can also say that Isay’s work is perhaps the first to enter into the philosophical articulations of the debate. His focus on the problem of autonomy underlines that Confucian philosophy was by

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<sup>1</sup> This term has often been mistranslated as “philosophy of life”. Isay’s solution is more appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance, the dominant study on the 1923–1924 controversy: D.W.Y. Kwok, *Scientism in Chinese Thought 1900–1950*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965.

<sup>3</sup> On the decentering of the May Fourth Movement see Ip Hung-yok, Hon Tze-ki, and Lee Chiu-chun, “The Plurality of Chinese Modernity: A Review of Recent Scholarship on the May Fourth Movement”, *Modern China* 29.4, 2003: 490–509.



no means dead and buried. As a matter of fact, some intellectuals produced a philosophical discourse that was rooted in both Chinese native traditions and newly imported Western philosophy.

The first chapter of Isay's book addresses the "view of life" in Chinese thought. It browses the major ideas regarding this topic from Confucius to Tan Sitong 譚嗣同 (1865–1898) and Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869–1936). As Isay sees it, "the ultimate context of existence, the linkage, the individual's autonomy, and the integration ideal (...) form the foundations of the 'view of life' in Chinese thought" (p. 10). Isay presents extracts from writings of classical and Neoconfucian thinkers in a chronological order and discusses their key ideas. This chapter depicts the "Chinese background" of the 1923–1924 debate.

The second chapter focuses on the Kantian "view of life" and on how it was introduced in China at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Isay's approach to the problem is very illuminating, as he discusses in parallel the roles played by Ernst Faber (1839–1899) and Liang Qichao. Faber, a German missionary-philosopher, was perhaps one of the first Westerners to write about Kant in Chinese, while Liang was one of the first Chinese intellectuals interested in Kant, although he knew Kant only through Japanese translations. As Isay puts it, by "reading both men's texts we gain a singular insight into the initial phase of the meeting between Chinese and Western ideas" (p. 33).

Chapter 3 sets up the context of the controversy over Science and Metaphysics by pointing at the emergence of a resistance towards scientism in China by the early 1920s. Isay here again chooses a dual approach to the subject. On the one hand, he presents the foreign sources of this resistance (Bergson, Eucken, Dewey, Russell, and Driesch); on the other hand, he studies two Chinese works that exemplify a native resistance to scientism: *Reflection on a trip to Europe* by Liang Qichao and *The Cultures of East and West and their philosophies* by Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988). A valuable point here is the author's emphasis on the importance accorded to the question of philosophical dualism. Isay rightly insists on the spirit/matter dichotomy as an essential element informing the early premises of the debate.

Chapters 4 and 5 make up the core of the study. The former shows how the problem of scientism was addressed and verbalized by Chinese intellectuals, while the latter presents the solutions advocated by the "metaphysics clique". As Zhang Junmai had written, the key question of the 1923 debate was "Can science govern 'the view of life'?" (p. 77). Many of the authors studied by Isay thought that this question should be answered in the negative. Isay here analyses, with much relevance, how the so-called metaphysicians attacked the totalistic and scientist view that any affirmative answer to this question would imply. Philosophically speaking, the bone of contention lay in two major sub-questions: the problems of



mind-reality correspondence and of the autonomy of the different spheres of the human experience. At this point, Isay enters into a detailed reading of the texts, thus clarifying many points raised in the debate. His conclusion is very clear: “Lin, the two Zhangs, Liang and the other supporters of metaphysics agreed that there was a break between human life and the application of scientific explanations” (p. 92). Drawing from that idea, chapter 5 then systematically arranges the views and arguments of the supporters of metaphysics concerning the “view of life”. The central idea discussed here is in fact the very definition of this “view of life” promoted so often, but explained so seldom. Isay achieves a real *tour de force* in shedding light on the various frameworks hidden behind a multiplicity of discourses.

Carrying on the discussion, chapter 6 examines several ideas of Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1883–1968), Hou Wailu 侯外廬 (1903–1987) and Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895–1990). Although this part is considerably shorter, Isay succeeds in showing that “the three men continued to think in terms of linkage, of autonomy and integration, or transpersonal interrelatedness” (p. 121).

In the concluding part of his study, Isay eventually discusses the question of the meaning of being human as addressed in philosophical discourses in modern China. He emphasizes that even if the traditional discourse on the human nature adapted itself to a new philosophical context of syncretism between East and West, the concern regarding the “view of life” “still preserved its appeal” and was “relevant to the Chinese intellectuals with humanistic persuasions” (p. 130).

As such, the work under review here is a significant and trustworthy contribution to the study of the philosophy of the “view of life” in twentieth century China. Isay’s readings and translations of the texts, as well as his philosophical explanations provide deep and valid insights. His book helps to gain a better and perhaps more balanced comprehension of the intellectual debates of the May Fourth era. Still, this would not be a book review if I only eulogized Isay’s work. Three methodological shortfalls shall indeed be put to the fore.

Firstly, one has to question the status of the secondary literature adduced by the author. It seems somewhat delicate if, in a study on a particular author, that very author’s writings are also quoted as secondary scientific literature. In chapter 1, Isay quotes Qian Mu’s *Chinese Learning in the recent three hundred years*<sup>4</sup> in order to present the philosophical thought of several Qing scholars, but in chapter 6, Qian Mu is then analyzed as a main proponent of the modern Chinese philosophy of the “view of life” (pp. 117–120). Thus, Qian Mu holds an ambivalent

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<sup>4</sup> Qian Mu 錢穆, *Zhongguo jin sanbainian xueshu shi* 中國近三百年學術史, Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu, 1995.



position in Isay's research: It seems problematic to me if one places Qian Mu in the continuity of the history of a classical Chinese philosophy of the "view of life", when, at the same time, one reads the classical authors through Qian Mu's commentaries.

The second issue concerns the first chapter of the book. When presenting "the philosophy of the View of Life in Traditional Chinese thought", Isay seems to fall into cultural essentialism. Chinese philosophy appears very monolithic and Confucian-oriented, its development is presented as linear. It is of course difficult to expound, in such a short chapter, the richness and variety of intellectual traditions in pre-modern China, but an inch of postmodernity in questioning the notions of "Chinese Culture" or even "Western Culture" would certainly have been relevant. Isay replicates the dichotomy between Chinese and Western cultures without considering the epistemological basis of this assumption. In fact, he seems here entrenched in the cultural discourse of Neoconfucian thinkers, who regard Confucianism as the backbone of Chinese culture and Confucian philosophy as the only Chinese philosophy. If recent studies in the history of Chinese philosophy before its encounter with the West have succeeded in showing the diversity of the Chinese world of thought, one can regret that "traditional Chinese thought" still tends to be represented as an almost uniform block in studies about the modern era.

Thirdly, Isay's book, as most of the historiography of modern or contemporary Chinese philosophy is dominated by a hidden, if not unspoken teleological assumption, according to which Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995) is the center and the culmination of Chinese modern philosophy. Even if Mou's name is only mentioned three times in the entire book, a simple look at the table of contents reveals this tacit assumption. Chapter one, discussed above, presents the idealist conception of the view of life in Chinese thought, the second chapter is concerned with the view of life in the West, or, more precisely, in Kantianism. The following chapters focus on the encounter of these two views under different perspectives. Through a discussion of the 1923 controversy, Isay is in fact telling us the story of how Kant met Confucius in Modern China, and how that incidentally led to Mou. By raising this point, I do not wish to undermine the importance of Kant in modern China, or even the important role of Mou Zongsan. My intention is just to defend the idea that another history of modern Chinese philosophy may also be possible.

My criticism of Gad Isay's book thus rather expresses my concerns about the historiography of modern Chinese thought, than a negative evaluation of his valuable work. Isay's readings and explanations of the texts are very insightful and show a real philosophical concern toward the question of the view of life, and his book is a must-read for anyone interested in the intellectual debates of the



1920s. I simply would have wished him to show the same degree of philosophical inquisitiveness with regard to the *loci communes* in the historiographical field. Just to give an example: Wouldn't it perhaps be time to "decenter Kant in the history of modern Chinese Philosophy" and to attempt a broader and more balanced approach to this matter?







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Milich, Stephan / Pannewick, Friederike / Tramontini, Leslie (eds). *Conflicting Narratives: War, Trauma and Memory in Iraqi Culture*. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012, 286 pp., ISBN 978-3-89500-806-1.

*Conflicting Narratives: War, Trauma and Memory in Iraqi Culture* is the result of a conference held at the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies at Philipps-Universität Marburg in 2008, in cooperation with the research program “Europe in the Middle East – The Middle East in Europe” based in Berlin. The book examines the diverse and often conflicting representations of war, violence and destruction in Baathist and post-Baathist Iraq. It does so through the analysis of various cultural practices, mainly that of literature, but also other *lieux de mémoire*, such as monuments and commemorations. The work is divided into four main parts: I. Cultural and Political Narratives, II. Poetics of Trauma, III. The Dialectic of Home and Exile, and IV. *Shahādāt*: Essays on the Poetic of Semantics of the “Iraqi Place”. The book also includes an introduction by Stephan Milich, Friederike Pannewick and Leslie Tramontini, as well as a short biography of each contributor.

In the first chapter (I. Cultural and Political Narratives), Fatima Mohsen’s paper proposes an analysis, not only of the obvious dissimilarities between Iraqi writers of the exile and those writing inside Iraq, but also their similarities. For instance, while the “War generation” of Iraqi authors writing within the country were mainly concerned with Saddam Hussein’s prowess and battle victories, those outside Iraq stressed the cruelty and futility of war. Thus, even if their ethical values concerning war were opposite, “their preoccupations were almost identical” (11). In her contribution, Leslie Tramontini faces the numerous ethical problems of reading and studying poets who held official positions in Baathist Iraq. Can we consider studying someone as an intellectual if he did not speak against a dictatorial regime? Tramontini convincingly argues that viewing an intellectual as one who *should* necessarily oppose the state is a normative view. This idea was indeed put to the test in 2003 and eventually found to be false, since “the intellectuals who are categorized as ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ in the post-Saddam period are not necessarily identical with the ones during Saddam’s rule” (42). Hala Fattah examines oral testimonies by two authors who have lived and experienced writing during the Hashemite period (Fu’ād al-Takarlī and ‘Alī al-Sa’idī). Because she focuses on their personal representation of that era – rather than



that of their literary production – her contribution is more a historical than a literary overview. She highlights the contrast between al-Takarlı who tends to idealize the monarchical past – even though he had expressed himself against it at the time – with al-Sa‘idī, who does not. However, she comes to the conclusion that for both authors “Iraqis are not particularly religious; on the contrary, religion is seen to have been imposed on the country as a political ploy” (59).

In the second part on “Poetics of Trauma”, Friederike Pannewick examines a novel by Sinān Anṭūn (*I’jām*, 2006). Based on the analysis of individuality and subversive humor, she argues that from the end of the 1970s, Iraqi and – more generally Arabic – literature has shifted from a *revolutionary* one, i.e. a literature targeting the people as a whole, to a *subversive* one, i.e. a literature aiming at “the individual and his/her involvement in society” (66). Wiebke Walther’s contribution is concerned with war poetry during the Iran-Iraq war. She analyses the use of classical Arabic war poetry as a mean of propaganda by the Baathist regime. She shows how Saddam Hussein successfully manipulated literature and cinema directly to link his battle victories with those of the first Muslim conquests – notably the famous battle of *al-Qādisiyya* against the Sassanids in 636 – in order to consolidate his power. Baram, Rohde and Zeidel’s paper highlights the subtleties of commemorative production in the public sphere from 1958 to 2010. They notably examine the discrepancy between state-sponsored forms of commemorative culture and alternative grass-roots movements in Baathist Iraq and its consequences on the post-Baathist era. They come to the conclusion that since 2003, the culture of remembrance from above has been overall neglected, owing to the active participation of the population in the construction of a collective memory. In his analysis of the work of five contemporary poets writing in Iraq after 2003 (Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Rāḍī, Jamāl Jāsīm Amīn, Ḥusayn al-Qāṣid, ‘Umar al-Sarāy and Ḥamad Maḥmūd al-Dūkhī) Flayḥ Rikābī observes a dynamism of time and place. Linking the notions of past, present and future with those of suffering, happiness, and hope, Rikābī highlights the fragility of the Iraqi homeland: “Iraq is a carton of eggs carried by a kangaroo” he quotes Ḥamad Maḥmūd al-Dūkhī (139). Stephan Milich explores the representations of traumatic experiences, such as war, exile, solitude and martyrdom in the work of the poet Kamāl Sabtī and stresses his critical views, even though he wrote during the Baath period. For instance, his poem “The Martyr” in which the dead soldier is impersonated by a tear falling from a breathless heart eventually entering an empty house, an image that suggests that the martyr has suffered and died in vain.

In the third part, Iraqi voices from England, Sweden, Germany and elsewhere outside Iraq are put to the front. Christiane Schlote explores the theme of war in four theater plays, two by British authors (David Hare and Jonathan Holmes), and two by Iraqis (Hassan Abdulrazzak and Jawad Al Assadi). She shows how the



Iraqi authors of *Baghdad Wedding* (2007) and *Baghdadi Bath* (2005) make use of a writing strategy that could be called the “terror and mirth” technique where horror and humor are used in complicity in order to express the Iraqi tragedy. Abdulwahid Lu’lu’a examines the work of two “surviving Iraqi poets of the golden 1950’s” (‘Abd al-Razzāq ‘Abd al-Wāḥid and Muḥaffar al-Nawwāb) as well as younger ones, all living in exile. Lu’lu’a most notably tackles the issue of the “home-exile” poets, i.e. writers who are part of the million Iraqis who settled in other parts of the country for security reasons. In her analysis of two Iraqi novelists writing in Sweden (Salām ‘Abbūd and Janān Jāsim Ḥillāwī), Astrid Ottosson al-Bitar argues that most works produced in Sweden are mainly concerned with the Baath period, and at times with the Qāsim period. Based on Bakhtin’s definition of the epic narrative, she argues that both periods incarnate, respectively, the perfect *official narrative* and the perfect *counter-narrative* for the backdrop of a novel. Andreas Pflitsch looks at two novels written in German by Iraqi authors (Sherko Fattah and ‘Abbās Khidr), as well as one written in Arabic (Nājim Wālī), in order to compare the various strategies to write exile. Through the figure of Kerim, the Alevi protagonist of the migration novel *Das dunkle Schiff* (2008) by Sherko Fattah, Pflitsch asks if migration and exile offer a solution to the problem of Iraq, or if they are actually part of it. Can one forget trauma if one does not talk about it, or do traumas “assume monstrous dimensions” on the contrary, Kerim asks.

In the introduction to the last part of the book concerned with places and their relation to memory in Iraq, Atef Botros notes that the word *al-makān* (Arabic for “the place”) “does not only describe a location with specific meaning or a statement of place, [...] it can be also considered a container of memory” (227), as the word is derived from the root “to be” (*kān*). Similarly, we could use the image on urbanism put forward by André Corboz, who compares places such as the city to a never-ending “palimpsest” in which new layers – real or virtual – constantly superpose or replace previous elements. The five contributions of Ḥaydar Sa’id, Aḥmad Sa’dāwī, Ṣafā’ ‘Alwān, Jāsim ‘Āṣī and ‘Abbās Khidr (all translated by Yasmeen Hanoosh) indeed illustrate that notion: Sa’id through a multilayered metaphorization of Najaf; Sa’dāwī’s reflection on how Thawra City, a city quarter developed in the 1960s for poor Shiite families, created its own memory from scratch; and ‘Alwān with his numerous life memories of the town of Qal’at Sukkar. The last two are not centered around a home *per se*, but also reflect on two very symbolic places in Iraq’s recent history – the battlefield for ‘Āṣī and the prison for Khidr.

All contributions combine high scholarly quality with inspiring knowledge. The merits of this book are many: I will only mention here what are, in my view, its three main achievements. First, in an attempt to enrich the debate, the views



of cultural stakeholders who produce representations and verbalize them are conjoined with those who examine them through a historical, anthropological or literary lens. Each author's narrative nourishes those of the other authors, and in their combination these narratives lead to a new perspective.

Second, each contribution critically reflects – in its own way – on the arbitrary categorization of “inside” and “outside” cultural production, i.e. pro-regime vs. anti-regime literary world. This systematic approach prompts the reader to reflect on the importance of analyzing war-time cultural production as a whole, be it by those who support it or by those who resist it. More generally, it asks about the function of culture, the role of the intellectual, and the purpose of art. *Need* Iraqi art necessarily be political? And if so, is Baath-sponsored art more valuable than resistant art? These questions had to be asked in the context of post-Baathist Iraq, where the *bottom up* and the *top-down* perspectives on culture were so abruptly reversed.

Third and last, but by no means least, this study fills a documentary gap regarding the richness of Iraqi cultural production in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: it touches upon poetry, novels, theater, cinema, architecture, and visual arts. Compared to cultural production in other parts of the Arab world, contemporary Iraqi cultural history is too often disregarded, both by non-Iraqi Arabs and – ironically enough – by Iraqis themselves. This book thus represents a powerful challenge to this neglect. The quality of the contributions taken aside, one minor remark concerns its structure and chapter organization. With the exception of the last two chapters (III. The Dialectic of Home and Exile and IV. *Shahādāt*: Essays on the Poetic Semantics of the “Iraqi Place”), in which all contributions focus on the exile and on the symbolic function of *the Iraqi place* respectively, the lack of coherence in the order and appearance of titles is regrettable. For the first part of the book, it is indeed difficult to identify an overarching topic.

This study offers valuable materials and constitutes a major contribution to the research on the contemporary cultural history of both Iraq and the Arab world. The book will be indispensable to scholars working on Arabic literature and on Iraqi cultural history. Finally, it is a useful source for researchers working on migration and diaspora studies in general, both from a historical and a literary perspective, as the book discusses questions applicable to other regions around the globe too.



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**Pries, Andreas H. / Martzloff, Laetitia / Langer, Robert / Ambos, Claus (eds.).** *Rituale als Ausdruck von Kulturkontakt. „Synkretismus“ zwischen Negation und Neudefinition. Akten der interdisziplinären Tagung des Sonderforschungsbereiches „Ritualdynamik“ in Heidelberg, 3.–5. Dezember 2010.* (Studies in Oriental Religions 67). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013, 221 pp., ISBN 978-3-447-06911-3.

This book presents a collection of articles from the interdisciplinary conference “Rituals as Expression of Culture-Contact – “Syncretism” between Negation and New-Definition” organized in Heidelberg in December 2010 within the frame of the collaborative research center “‘Ritual Dynamics’ – Socio-Cultural Processes from a Historical and Culturally Comparative Perspective”, (SFB 619) funded by the German Research Foundation.

The aim of the conference as explained in the introduction was to establish a chronologically and geographically broad basis of case studies for a study of the complex phenomenon “syncretism”, and to debate and reevaluate to what extent the term “syncretism” might or might not serve to unite the different phenomena described in the different case studies. With the latter question, the project refers back to a collaborative research project from the 1970s on “Syncretism in Oriental Religions”, and to the conference volume *Synkretismus in den Religionen Zentralasiens*, edited by Walther Heissig and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit,<sup>1</sup> published 1987 in the same series (*Studies in Oriental Religions*) as the volume at hand.

Different from the previous project, this conference limits the large spectrum of phenomena, which can be characterized as syncretistic, by a focus on ritual. With the underlying assumption that cultural identities and therefore also cultural techniques and meaning do not emerge as closed systems, but are formed by exchange and contact, the organizers ask, which specific factors form rituals in cultural contact. Such factors might include hegemonic centers, cultural dominance, religious fashions as well as economic, political or geophysical factors.

Ten articles present exemplary case studies of syncretistic phenomena in contemporary as well as antique cultures in south-eastern Europe and Asia

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<sup>1</sup> Heissig, Walther / Klimkeit, Hans-Joachim (eds.). *Synkretismus in den Religionen Zentralasiens. Ergebnisse eines Kolloquiums vom 24.5 bis 26. 5 1983 in St. Augustin bei Bonn.* (Studies in Oriental Religions; 13). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1987.



Minor, in the Near-East and Egypt, in South and Southeast Asia, Central Africa and Central America. Four articles and the introduction are written in German; six articles are written in English. All articles are preceded by a short English abstract. Regrettably, the book does not offer an index or a separate bibliography, nor does it present information on the contributors.

Charles Stewart's article "Creolization, Ritual and Syncretism. From Mixture to Crystallization" opens the collection aptly with a discussion of the social science vocabulary for "cultural mixture". He shows that the commonly, and often almost interchangeably used terms, which describe cultural mixture, namely "syncretism", "creolization", "hybridity", "fusion", all focus on "mixing", and that their use is marred by confusion and crossovers. He contrasts this then with the clear analytical vocabulary of a "hard science" (p. 4) concerned with mixture, namely chemistry, which differentiates different kinds of mixtures according to well defined principles. However, the author rightly points out that chemistry focuses on units of nature – and that "these units do not talk back". Different from chemistry, the people classified in social sciences can be affected by classification; thus modes of classification may cause "looping effects" (p. 5); classification itself might cause social change.

With the example of two contemporary case studies, Albanian immigrants' changing role in a local Greek patron-saint festival, and the changes to a local ritual brought by Japanese Brazilians<sup>2</sup> in a kite flying festival in Hamamatsu, Stewart argues for the importance of the temporal dimension in the evaluation and study of mixture: "hybridity must be understood temporally as a particular moment when exogenous traditions appear new and different to each other" (p. 9). These hybrids may eventually become a new coherent entity – thus hybrids have "life-cycles" (p. 9), people move from consciously perceiving mixture to "taking their own composition for granted" (p. 9). Proposing the term "*nucleation*", Stewart argues that the study of syncretism or hybridity should shift its focus from components and proportions to "the formation and dissolution of 'zones of difference' or 'spaces of identification'". Such a focus would allow to "highlight the crucial dimension of time", in the process of "formation, dissolution, and reformation of entities" (p. 10).

Philipp Bruckmayr's article "Between Institutionalized Syncretism and Official Particularism. Religion among the Chams of Vietnam and Cambodia" presents a case study of syncretism and difference among communities of Cham in Cambodia and Vietnam. The Cham are the descendants of the former principality

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<sup>2</sup> "Japanese Brazilians" refers to second or third generation descendents of Japanese immigrants in Brazil, who returned to live and work in Japan.



Champa in Vietnam, which was dissolved in 1832. The religion of the Cham has seen as of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the development of a distinct southern Cham Brahmanism and also growing Islamization. Today, the larger part of Cham people lives in diaspora in Cambodia; a smaller, non-diasporic group of Chams live in Vietnam in the former Champa area, in Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan.

About two thirds of the non-diasporic Chams in Vietnam profess Cham Brahmanism, one third adheres to a local form of Islam. The two groups, called *Cham Jat* (Brahman) and *Cham Bani* (Muslim), generally live in separate villages, and they have developed different rituals. However, in doctrines and practice, the two groups display “a syncretism greatly contingent on the respective sub-ethnic religious other” (p. 18), with examples of co-opted deities, a long established practice of active inter-religious interaction and a more recent shared interest in their common literary heritage in Cham language. Bruckmayr observes that the two religious groups of the Cham in Vietnam live in “a quasi-symbiotic state with clearly defined religious boundaries, which in no way obstruct the partaking in a shared ritual world and view of history” (pp. 20–21).

The diasporic Cham from Cambodia, different from the Cham of Vietnam, are exclusively Muslim. The original Cham script and literature fell in disuse among most of them since the early 1900's. A process of Malayization lead to the emergence of two factions: one uses Malay language in religious texts and education, the other insists on Cham and Qur'ānic Arabic. In 1998 the Cambodian government “institutionalized” these differences, recognizing two separate Islamic communities: the *Cambodian Highest Council for Religious Affairs*, and the *Islamic Community Kan Imam San*. This second group rejects the use of Malay script for religious education and promotes Cham script. Referring to Stewart's article's injunction to look at the crystallization- instead of the mixing-points, and at specific timeframes of such processes, Bruckmayr notes that official recognition by the state helped the *Kan Imam San's* community's re-assertion “of distinctly local Cham traditions in the face of the local consequences of regionally, and even globally, totalizing hegemonic religious processes” (pp. 36–37).

Contextualizing his case in the larger theme of syncretism in Islam, the author criticizes the frequent use of the term *syncretistic* in a sense intending “heterodox” as opposed to an imagined “essential”, “true” Islam. He invokes instead Asad's<sup>3</sup> call to treat Islam as a discursive tradition, with numerous sub-discourses shaped by local and historical conditions pushing towards coherence while sustaining particularities. In this sense, the Southeast-Asian Muslim groups

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<sup>3</sup> Asad, Talal. *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, Washington D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986 (reprint 1996).



can be considered as distinct local Islamic traditions rather than cases of syncretism (p. 39). The case of the Vietnamese *Cham Bani* Muslims however is more complex on account of its quasi-symbiotic relationship with the Brahmanist *Cham Jat*, which he characterizes as “institutionalized syncretism”. This syncretism is characterized by one shared local religious culture, held together by the existence and maintenance of clearly delineated religious boundaries, in a constant process of dialogical interaction.

Hasan Ali Khan’s essay “The Satpanth. A multi-faith belief system from the Indo-Muslim Middle Ages” offers an analysis of aspects of syncretism of esoteric astrological teachings in the belief system of the Satpanth (true path). Satpanth is a complex teaching and belief system that originates from a Shii-Ismaili background and incorporates Zoroastrian and Hindu elements. It was founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by the Ismaili missionary Pir Shams, who “perfected a system of metaphysical interlacing called Satpanth, or true path, setting up ceremonies that tied him to the Suhrawardi Sufi Order” (p. 43). Hasan Ali Khan presents history and teachings of the Satpanth, starting from an analysis of festivals at the shrine of Pir Shams in Punjab. Exploring aspects of esoteric astrological teachings and astronomical calculations, the study documents in much detail how an astrological framework based on the Persian New Year (Nauroz) and its connection to the vice-regency (*wilayat*) of the first Shii Imam Ali, is correlated astrologically with local practices related to the Hindu month of Chetir. The author furthermore presents illustrated examples of symbols and layouts of architecture, in particular in monuments belonging to the Suhrawardi Order, which show the multi-religious symbolism of Satpanth and an astrological symbolism related to the vice-regency (*wilayat*) of Ali and Shii-Ismaili esoteric teachings. The essay is richly illustrated with 3 tables, 2 astrological charts, and 12 figures with photos, charts and designs.

In “Limits of Syncretism: Bababudhan Dargah in South India as a Paradigm for Overlapping Religious Affiliations and Co-existence”, Sudha Sitharaman discusses the interaction of Muslim and Hindu traditions in the local context of the *Dargah* of Bababudhan in Chickamagalur in Karnataka. This *dargah* is, like other *darghas*, a “multi-religious shrine” (p. 81), where Muslims and non-Muslims venerate the saints. Sitharaman argues that in the context of her case-study, it would be a mistake to speak of overlapping religiosity and practices in terms of syncretism, because the term syncretism would assume that “Hinduism and Islam are internally singular and absolutely exclusive, and further, that the Semitic religions and Hindu traditions are instances of the same kind and therefore it is possible that followers of both are able to draw from each other’s practices” (p. 109). She argues her case by drawing up evidence from the perspectives of devotee individuals and the nuances in their understanding. She proposes that instead of



syncretism, which presupposes a singularity, the concept of tradition as proposed by Asad (1986)<sup>4</sup> might serve as a more appropriate analytic concept: “Tradition consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history.” (p. 108)

Eszter Spät’s article “On Soil and Jinn. Ritual practices and syncretism among the Yezidis of Northern Iraq” discusses syncretistic developments focusing on healing rituals of the Kurdish speaking Yezidis in Northern Iraq. Yezidi religion shows the influence of different religions once present in the region of Northern Iraq. It is an “oral religion” (p. 112), and orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy assumes an important role in Yezidism. Rituals are generally connected to Yezidi holy places, “owned” by *khas* (angelic or divine beings). Many of these holy places are known for specialized healing powers, and healing rituals and practices connected to them can be traced back centuries and can be related to practices of other religions. One example cited is the ritual of incubation (the practice of sleeping in the shrine), a practice well known in the Mediterranean Basin from ancient Greek religion to Christianity, and among Muslims, in particular those belonging to Sufism. Another ritual practice that can be traced in Christian and Muslim historical practices is the use of sacred soil from a holy place. These rituals therefore “connect the Yezidis with other cultures and religions of the region in time and space” (p. 111). Turning to contemporary Yezidi-Muslim relations, Spät points out, that while traditionally Muslims considered Yezidis as heretics, infidels and unclean (p. 124), Yezidi healing shrines nevertheless also attract Muslim supplicants, and there are instances of influence of Muslim healing practices in Yezidi rituals (p. 126). However, recent developments show according to Spät a “reverse syncretism” (p. 129), where increasingly educated Yezidis, trying to emphasize philosophical and moral elements of their religion while rejecting those considered unscientific or superstitious, also reject anything that is perceived as an adoption from Islam.

Yuri Stoyanov, in his paper “The Question of the Existence of Dualist Layers in Alevi/Bektāṣī Syncretism and their Central Asian, Anatolian or Balkan Provenance”, presents yet another example of a religious phenomenon often characterized as syncretism, namely the Alevi/Bektāṣī tradition. Stoyanov focuses on the question of the existence of earlier Manichaean and/or later Eastern Christian dualist layers in Alevism/Bektāṣism and its implications for the appraisal of the phenomenon termed Alevi/Bektāṣī syncretism. He discusses a nineteenth cen-

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<sup>4</sup> Just like Bruckman in the same volume, she refers to Asad’s claim that an anthropology of Islam should begin from a concept of a discursive tradition. See Asad 1986 (repr. 1996): 7, 14–17.



ture historiographical model, which claims that medieval Christian dualist heretical communities in Anatolia and the Balkans converted to Islam as a reaction against persecution. While evidence based research has discredited this theory, it has proven a remarkable vitality in the post-Ottoman Christian majority states, who tried to anchor Alevi and Bektāṣī identities in local Christian environments. Scholarly research arguing in favor or against these theories coexists in these cases with top-down ideological and politico-religious projects intended to mould public opinion. Stoyanov criticizes that these ideological schemas, which also claim a “religious affinity” between late medieval Eastern Christian dualism and Islam, generally ignore the vital doctrinal spheres of cosmology, theology, anthropology, soteriology, and eschatology. Furthermore, they confuse conversion from one religious tradition to another with a “cross-confessional rapprochement for religio-political or socio-political reasons” (p. 139). In contrast, de-ideologized studies of patterns of interchange and overlap in spheres of cult and belief between different local versions of Christianity and Islam in the Middle East, Caucasus, Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans, and Anatolia, show that all Christian elements found in Alevism/Bektāṣism relate rather to normative and popular Christianity than to heretical dualist forms. However, the theories relating Alevism/Bektāṣism to early Christian dualism continue to flourish and to be instrumentalized in the dialogue and interchange between theological, scholarly and internal Alevi discourses on Alevism.

In her essay “Kult und Ritual der Isis zwischen Ägypten und Rom. Ein transkulturelles Phänomen”, written in German, the Egyptologist Svenja Nagel presents examples of syncretism in antiquity. She documents with many examples multi-layered and differentiated forms of syncretism in the nature, iconography and cult of the Egyptian goddess Isis between Egypt and Rome. Analyzing the syncretistic phenomena relating to nature and iconography of the goddess, she differentiates (1) equivalencies, like the equation of names of Egyptian and Greek deities, e.g. Isis and Demeter, as documented by Herodotus, (2) adaptation and hybridization, exemplified by the deity Sarapis, which was formed from a hybridization of Osiris and Apis with Greek iconographic characteristics, and (3) the integration of different deities in the concept of “Isis”. For examples of the latter, Nagel points to iconographies, which combine elements of different goddesses into an Isis-Aphrodite and an Isis-Astarte. Asking how this syncretism reveals itself in ritual, the author inquires to what extent ritual practice as documented in Roman and Greek contexts reflects original Egyptian rituals. As examples of adaptation and transformation of ritual, she cites the Greek prayer formula praying for “the refreshing water of Osiris”, which is found in funeral inscriptions in Egypt and Rome from the 1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, and suggests its possible relation to ancient Egyptian cults of water libations for the dead. In addition, she illustrates



how some elements of the rituals in Greco-Roman Isis sanctuaries show a continuation of Egyptian cults with regard to the accessibility of the inner sanctuary. She closes her essay by pointing out that the porosity of the religious systems of antiquity, which allowed a steady flow of ideas and concepts in both directions, is at the very base of the common cultural heritage of Europe and the Orient.

Joachim Friedrich Quack's paper "Zauber ohne Grenzen. Zur Transkulturalität der spätantiken Magie", documents how late antique (2<sup>nd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE) magic was a "very transcultural phenomenon incorporating elements of different origin and blending them in a new whole" (p. 177). "Magic" and "magic rituals" here pertain to rituals with a specific and well defined aim, related usually to an individual, which are non-recurrent and conducted either prophylactically or in response to a specific need or crisis. Manifold sources relating to magic and magic rituals have been excavated in the entire realm of the Roman Empire. These sources often transgress the borders between text and image; papyri texts of manuals and recipes are often illustrated; amulets and spells on metal tablets and cameos contain images and inscriptions.

Socially, even though magic was not publicly allowed, networks of persons involved or interested in magic existed. Quack details examples of the differentiated use of various languages, including Hieratic, Demotic, Hieroglyphic, Hebrew, Persian and Greek, which points to polyglot language competences of the users and authors of the various texts and manuals. With many concrete examples he documents how different languages were incorporated or transcribed into Greek, resulting in "opaque sound-sequences" (p. 177) valued primarily for their supposed power. Another point of interest is the intermingling of Jewish and Egyptian traditions, which Quack illustrates with examples of the Egyptian gods Ptah and Thot being taken up in otherwise Jewish contexts.

Contextualizing his case-study in the context of syncretism, the author points out that the examples cited, which have been traditionally described as syncretism, generally have one common characteristic: religiously relevant figures are incorporated in a new context. Often, in the new context, different traditions meet and new conceptions of the incorporated elements appear. Quack raises the question, to what extent openness for new figures and ideas might be a characteristic or even part of the nature of religious systems in general. In another line of thought Quack asks to what extent a deep structure of procedures might last through changes in space and time. He illustrates this point with the example of a technique from the late antiquity's magic manuals which he calls "the torture of the thief", tracing changes step by step from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to him, these steps should not be termed syncretism. Instead, they represent a reworking of basic structural elements to fit the respective social-religious circumstances of different times.



The last two, rather short articles of the volume offer perspectives from Africa and Mesoamerica.

Heinrich Balz article, “Ndie, das Dorfahnenfest der Bakossi in Kamerun. Regionale Abgrenzungen und vorkoloniale Verwandlungen”, focuses on traces of the pre-Christian annual village ancestor feast Ndie, which survive in the present Christian harvest thanksgiving of the Bakossi in Cameroon. Balz, who has studied these rituals during a ten year theological mission among the Bakossi, describes the village ancestor festival of the Bakossi, pointing out differences to similar festivities of neighboring communities. Evaluating different well established anthropological theories, he concludes that the Bakossi festival might be best explained resorting to Victor Turners (1969)<sup>5</sup> concept of *communitas*. Paying attention to the issue of cyclical rituals vs. non-recurrent crisis rituals, which is also relevant for the Christianization process, since regular rituals are easier replaceable than non-recurrent crisis rituals, he argues that the Bakossi changed their village festival from a non-recurrent crisis ritual into a regular agrarian ritual already in pre-colonial times. This then facilitated the introduction of the regular Christian harvest thanksgiving ritual. Balz points out explicitly that his case study rather than contributing to the conference motto “Syncretism and Culture-Contact”, shows the limits of the concept, because in this case changes were due not to contacts with another culture, but prompted by adaptation to internal social processes. He argues that this example underscores that new developments do not exclusively arise from contacts with different cultures.

Viola König’s article “‘Über-Kreuz’ – Ikonographie und Symbolismus meso-amerikanischer Kreuzformen vor und nach der spanischen Eroberung”, asks what effect the introduction of the iconography and symbolism of the cross as a symbol of Christianity by the Spanish conquerors had on indigenous uses of the symbolism of a cross or quincunx. She presents an analysis of occurrences of the Mesoamerican symbol of the quincunx in the city layout of Teotihuacan and in several signs of the Mesoamerican ritual calendar, concluding that the cross was an important basic form for the symbolic representation of the worldview of indigenous Mesoamerican people. In her opinion, the Christian cross did not substitute the indigenous cross or quincunx, because it belonged to a new world, perceived as parallel to the traditional one at first (p. 221), and eventually replacing it, because “following the suppression of the pre-Columbian world and the native religions, the use of these [indigenous] symbols no longer made sense” (p. 209).

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<sup>5</sup> Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process. Structure and Antistructure*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.



Reconsidering the aims of the conference and publication mentioned in the introduction, the volume succeeds in presenting a broad base of case studies and theoretical considerations for the discussion of “syncretism” – from concrete and well documented case studies that show the nuances and complexities of processes termed “syncretism”, to theoretical considerations of the usefulness of the term in different contexts, from documentations of syncretistic processes in antiquity to demonstrations of the effect of the use of the term in scholarly discourse on socio-religio-political discourse, akin to Steward’s so-called “looping effects”. However, this reviewer feels that the second aim, namely to debate and reevaluate to what extent the term “syncretism” might or might not serve to unite the different phenomena described in different case studies, would have deserved to be addressed in more detail either in the introduction, or in an additional conclusion. In view of the fact that all articles argue explicitly for or against the usefulness of the term of “syncretism”, the reader misses an introduction or conclusion, which pulls all the different threads of the case studies together, offering an explicit re-evaluation of the term under discussion. The summarizing statement “It has become clear again that there is no better term than ‘syncretism’ as *façon de parler*” (p. IX) does not really do justice to the wide array of opinions presented. Nevertheless, the book is a valuable contribution that will be appreciated by historians of religion interested in syncretism or in inter-cultural and inter-religious contacts of the past and present, as well as by students of the religions of the various regions represented in this volume.







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**Strnad, Jaroslav:** *Morphology and Syntax of Old Hindī: Edition and Analysis of One Hundred Kabīr vāṇī Poems from Rājasthān*. Leiden: Brill, 2013, 573 pp., ISBN 978-9-00425-112-0.

The medieval Indian poet Kabir (ca. 15<sup>th</sup> century) has been a subject of academic study since the Italian Capuchin Marco Della Tomba (1726–1803) wrote “Diversi sistemi della religion dell’Indostano” (1766). Regardless of the impressive amount of scholarship on Kabir during the succeeding three centuries, a large body of materials remain unstudied and one major obstacle remains – the mixture of north Indian dialects used by Kabir. Students of old Hindi have been referring to a number of classical grammatical works like Kellogg’s *A Grammar of the Hindi Language* (1876), Dhirendra Varma’s *La Langue Braj* (1935) to study Kabir. The linguistic inconsistency and variety of Kabir’s language, however, hampers the effectiveness of these works.

The recent publication *Morphology and Syntax of Old Hindī* by Jaroslav Strnad represents a welcome breakthrough in the philological and linguistic study of Kabir. The book consists of three parts. The first part is a critical edition of carefully selected one hundred *pads* that represents the most popular Kabirian *pads* of early 17<sup>th</sup> century in Rajasthan. The text is based on the manuscript no. 3190, Sañjaya Śarmā Saṅgrahālaya, Jaipur, compiled between 1614 and 1621. The poems belong to the western or Rajasthani recension of the works of Kabir, the tradition most studied by philologists including Śyām Sundar Dās, Mātā Prasād Gupta, Charlotte Vaudeville, Winand Callewaert, etc. Though included in Callewaert’s *The Millennium Kabir Vāṇī* (2000), this manuscript is for the first time critically edited and studied in detail. The second part “Morphology and syntax of the *pads*” is a detailed grammatical analysis of the language used in the *pads* from a morphological perspective. The third part “Morphemicon” is a dictionary, not of words, but of the morphemes, and the way they constitute words. Approaching the language of the corpus innovatively, the author aims at replacing the student’s “brainwork” with the “hard labour on the part of the compiler” (p. 6).

Strnad has successfully compiled a grammar that enables the readers to acquire the grammatical rules in the process of translation by establishing the links among morphemes repeatedly. The approach started by the late Czech Indologist Vladimír Miltner (1933–1997) is different from the conventional grammar by focusing on the “descriptions of particular grammatical morph[eme]s occurring in



the text rather than on paradigms and general rules” (p. 150). In the second part, morphemes of same grammatical functions are grouped together, followed by explicit linguistic explanations based on a mastery of historical linguistic knowledge and solid research on the historical evolution of North Indian languages. One can also choose to use the scientifically composed morphemicon directly to analyse any particular *pad* in the collection word by word and refer to the second part only for further illustration. For instance, the word “kīnhām” can be divided into three morphemes “kī-” (verb “to do”), “-nh-” (perfective participle marker) and “-ām” (case maker of dir.sg.m., dir.pl.m. and other possibilities) and looked up for successively. The possible combination between each morpheme is clearly indicated. Moreover, with a limited number of morphemes, the morphemicon is able to cover a number of variants of the same expression, e.g. “kar-O-y-au”, “kī-O-y-ā” (both as “to do” – perfective marker – inserted consonant – case marker of dir.sg.m.), a phenomenon that has added much burden to the earlier grammars. According to my personal experience, one becomes efficient quickly as familiarity with the morphemes increases. I have also tested the morphemicon on Kabirian pads in other early manuscripts and it turns out to be quite competent. Due to the linguistic diversity, the morphemicon provides multiple choices of nominal cases or verbal forms on some occasions. In such cases, rather than leading to a single solution, the morphemicon helps the reader set the linguistic boundaries within which the translation would be grammatically acceptable. Now computers are able to read unsegmented Sanskrit text such as one online “Sanskrit Reader Companion” (<http://sanskrit.inria.fr/DICO/reader.fr.html>). Given the simplicity of Strnad’s approach as shown above, there is a good prospect that computers can help researchers read old Hindi texts with a database like Strnad’s morphemicon.

Besides its success as a very useful reference book for learning old Hindi, the book also contains a number of insightful and noteworthy reflections on various aspects of the text. The manuscript, though known as *Pañcavāṇī* (lit. “Voices of five”, a collection of poems of five saints, namely Dadu, Namdev, Kabir, Raidas and Hardas), actually consists of three collections of Dadu, Kabir and other poets’ works. Strnad tends to associate the dialectal diversity to the hypothesis that the manuscript is “a product of collecting activity of greater number of singers and scribes” (p. 490). The author also puts forward the notion of “thematic block” to discuss the contents of the poems. Strnad found pads of *nāthapanthī* inspiration to be the largest clearly defined block of poems, constituting 18.5% of all the pads in the manuscript. The pads containing “general warnings, exhortations, and reflections on the ultimate futility of worldly concerns” (p. 489), for which Kabir is most renowned, is marginally more than this *nāthapanthī* thematic block. This observation supports the claim to associate Kabir with *nāthapanthī* influence.



With a careful and valuable edition of the historically popular Kabirian *pads*, inspiring approach and in-depth linguistic analysis, *Morphology and Syntax of Old Hindī* is greatly informative and helpful for the study of Kabir, and old Hindi. The anthology is a specimen of the early Kabirian textual tradition. Together with Strnad's observations about the manuscript compilation, it reveals how the long-lasting textual tradition started. The morphological study approach Kabir's mixed language creatively and accurately, which makes the book most beneficial for those who are seeking an efficient way to study old Hindi and the wisdom behind.







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**Worringer, Renée.** *Ottomans Imagining Japan. East, Middle East, and Non-Western Modernity at the Turn of the Twentieth Century.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, xviii + 350 S., ISBN 978-1-1373-8459-1.

Dieses Buch der Historikerin und Osmanistin Renée Worringer über osmanische Japanbilder an der Wende zum 20. Jahrhundert wurde lange erwartet. Es basiert auf Worringers 2001 an der University of Chicago angenommenen Dissertation, die in Forschungen zu den osmanisch-japanischen Beziehungen bereits weit rezipiert worden ist und die inzwischen über die Proquest-Datenbanken auch online eingesehen werden kann.<sup>1</sup> In der Zeit bis zum Erscheinen des vorliegenden Buches hat sich Worringer mit einem gelungenen Sammelband<sup>2</sup> und mehreren Aufsätzen<sup>3</sup> zu osmanischen und ägyptischen Japanbildern hervorgetan. *Ottomans Imagining Japan* fasst diese Leistungen zusammen und leistet durch seine Untersuchung der lange vernachlässigten osmanischen Auseinandersetzung mit Japan einen wertvollen Beitrag dazu, einerseits osmanische Geschichte aus ihrer dichotomischen Beziehung zu Europa zu befreien und stärker in globalen Prozessen zu verorten, andererseits auch die Wirkung des Aufstiegs Japans auf Intellektuelle im Nicht-Westen besser zu begreifen. Durch diesen globalgeschichtlichen Fokus lässt sich Worringers Buch in eine Reihe stellen mit den einflussreichen Studien Rebecca Karls oder Cemil Aydins, die demonstriert haben, inwieweit das Bewusstsein asiatischer Eliten im späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert durch globale Zusammenhänge geprägt war.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Worringer, Renée (2001): *Comparing Perceptions. Japan as Archetype for Ottoman Modernity, 1876–1918.* Dissertation, Ann Arbor: UMI.

<sup>2</sup> Worringer, Renée (Hg.) (2007): *The Islamic Middle East and Japan. Perceptions, Aspirations, and the Birth of Intra-Asian Modernity.* Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> Worringer, Renée (2004): „‘Sick Man of Europe’ or ‘Japan of the Near East’? Constructing Ottoman Modernity in the Hamidian and Young Turk Eras“. In: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36.2: 207–230; Worringer, Renée (2007): „Japan’s Progress Reified. Modernity and Arab Dissent in the Ottoman Empire“. In: *The Islamic Middle East and Japan. Perceptions, Aspirations, and the Birth of Intra-Asian Modernity.* Hrsg. von Renée Worringer. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 91–119; Worringer, Renée (2012): „Rising Sun Over Bear. The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War Upon the Young Turks“. In: *«L’ivresse de la liberté». La révolution de 1908 dans l’Empire ottoman.* Hrsg. von François Georgeon. Paris u.a.: Peeters, 455–485.

<sup>4</sup> Vgl. Karl, Rebecca (2002): *Staging the World. Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century.* Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press (Asia-Pacific: Culture, Politics, and Society);



Aus dem Titel nicht unbedingt sofort ersichtlich, wird in *Ottomans Imagining Japan* „osmanisch“ so breit gefasst, dass auch zahlreiche Quellen aus der arabischsprachigen Levante und dem britisch besetzten, nur noch formell osmanischen Ägypten in den Blick genommen werden. Auch einzelne russisch-tatarische Publikationen werden behandelt, wodurch sich insgesamt eine beeindruckende geographische Breite ergibt. Beeindruckend ist auch die Zusammenstellung der Quellen, von denen ein Grossteil aus Zeitungs- und Zeitschriftenartikeln sowie Archivmaterial besteht und durch Worringer erstmals wissenschaftlich ausgewertet wird.

Das Buch gliedert sich inhaltlich in zwei Teile: Der erste, vom Umfang her geringer Teil, beleuchtet die internationalen Rahmenbedingungen und Umstände der japanisch-osmanischen Begegnung im späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert. Der zweite Teil widmet sich dann den konkreten Erscheinungsformen von Japanbezügen im osmanischen und ägyptischen Modernisierungsdiskurs.

Beiden Teilen ist das Thema des „Modernen“ vorangestellt, zu dessen Klärung die Definitionsarbeit der Autorin jedoch gering ausfällt. Interessiert ist Worringer hauptsächlich an dem Prozess der Modernisierung, d.h. der erfolgreichen Aneignung westlicher Standards durch eine nicht-westliche Nation. Modernisierung habe aber im Verständnis des 19. Jahrhunderts eine Hierarchie beinhaltet, durch die die als nicht-westlich identifizierten Länder und Nationen in die Position eines inhärent unterlegenen Orients gedrängt wurden. Die Orientierung an dem ebenfalls nicht-westlichen Japan habe den osmanischen Reformern die Gelegenheit geboten, diese Hierarchie zu überwinden, sogar umzukehren, ohne das durch den zuvor als übermächtig gedachten Westen inspirierte Modernisierungsprojekt aufzugeben:

Ottoman elites used the historical analogy of modern Japan, its national awakening and entrance into the global arena, to refute Orientalist claims of Muslim and Asian inferiority and to reposition East above West in a defensive, anticolonial posture. [...] Japan became the model to emulate that released the Ottoman Empire from its hopelessly subordinate position vis-à-vis Europe. Japan would come to represent an “Eastern custodian” of Western values. (S. 47)

Was die Osmanen weiterhin an den Japanern faszinierte, war deren augenscheinlich gelungene Vereinigung der Errungenschaften der westlichen Moderne mit „östlicher kultureller Essenz“ – einer kaum näher definierbaren Umschreibung des bewahrenswerten Eigenen. Die sich daraus ergebende Vorstellung einer



„nicht-westlichen Moderne“ – für Worringer der Schlüsselbegriff zum Verständnis osmanischer Japanbilder – ermöglichte es den osmanischen Intellektuellen, die von europäischen Denkern wie Gustave Le Bon verbreiteten Theorien einer rassistisch begründeten, dauerhaften Inferiorität der asiatischen Nationen im Allgemeinen und der Türken im Speziellen auszuhebeln. Für diese Möglichkeit waren die Osmanen bereit, ihre historischen Bindungen zu Europa zu relativieren und sich stattdessen durch eine Selbstpositionierung im Orient bzw. Asien mit Japan zu solidarisieren.

Japans Erfolg offenbarte sich dabei vor allem in dessen erfolgreichem Krieg gegen Russland 1904/05, der über ganz Asien hinweg Enthusiasmus für Japan erzeugte. Der erste Teil von Worringers Buch führt aus, dass auch im Osmanischen Reich und Ägypten der japanische Triumph im Grossen und Ganzen als eigener Sieg betrachtet wurde, wobei allerdings Sultan Abdülhamid II. eine Ausnahme machte. Dieser befürchtete angesichts der unter Verweis auf den japanischen Konstitutionalismus geäußerten Forderungen der osmanischen Opposition nach einer Wiederinkraftsetzung der Verfassung sowie der 1905 ausbrechenden Revolution in Russland Unruhen auch in seinem eigenen Land. Weiterhin, so Worringer, sei Abdülhamid mit Blick auf die Lobpreisungen des Meiji-Tennō auch um einen möglichen Prestigeverlust als Kalif und Führer der Muslime weltweit besorgt gewesen. Anlass dafür seien besonders Stimmen in der jungtürkischen Opposition gewesen, die eine Konversion der Japaner zum Islam prophezeiten und für diesen Fall eine Übertragung des Kalifentitels auf den japanischen Kaiser diskutierten.

Die Vorstellung einer japanischen Konversion zum Islam wird in der Forschung traditionellerweise als Ausdruck naiver muslimischer Japanschwärmerei nach dem Russisch-Japanischen Krieg interpretiert.<sup>5</sup> Worringer schliesst sich dieser Interpretation an, argumentiert aber zusätzlich, dass die Imagination eines muslimischen Japans nötig gewesen sei, um das sich den Osmanen darbietende Dilemma einer Selbstidentifizierung mit einem nicht-muslimischen Land zu lösen. Gleichzeitig hätten die Japaner solche Spekulationen befördert, um Verbündete für die panasiatischen Ambitionen ihres Landes zu gewinnen:

If Japan were to convert, there would no longer be any discrepancy between identifying with the Islamic community and with the strength of Asian modernity as represented by Japan. The Japanese propagated this rumor when possible to further their own political goals and to facilitate relations with Muslims in various countries as a prelude to any future conflict with Russia. (S. 81)

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<sup>5</sup> Vgl. z.B. Kreiser, Klaus (1981): „Der japanische Sieg über Rußland (1905) und sein Echo unter den Muslimen“. In: *Die Welt des Islams*, 21.1–4: 209–239.



Trotz der weit verbreiteten Sympathien für Japan unter der osmanischen Bevölkerung scheiterten bekanntlich alle japanisch-osmanischen Verhandlungen über die Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen an der Weigerung der osmanischen Regierung, Japan die gleichen Privilegien zuzugestehen, wie sie die westlichen Grossmächte in den Kapitulationen genossen. Stattdessen versuchten panasiatische und panislamische Aktivisten auf inoffiziellen Wege, Vorstellungen einer asiatischen Union Realität werden zu lassen. Ausführlich behandelt wird in diesem Zusammenhang das Wirken des russischen Tataren Abdürresid İbrahim, der im Jahr 1909 nach Japan reiste und daraufhin nebst zahlreichen Artikeln in der osmanischen Zeitschrift *Sırât-ı Müstakim* seinen berühmten Reisebericht *Âlem-i İslâm* („Die Welt des Islams“) veröffentlichte.

Im zweiten Teil ihrer Studie weist Worringer nach, wie das Modell Japan sowohl durch den osmanischen Sultan als auch durch die jungtürkische Opposition zu sehr unterschiedlichen Zwecken eingesetzt werden konnte. Aus dem japanischen Vorbild konnte einerseits die Forderung nach umfassenden liberalen Reformen abgeleitet werden, andererseits wurden mit Verweis auf die Selektivität der japanischen Übernahmen aus dem Westen aber auch konservative Positionen untermauert. Auch nach der Revolution von 1908, als sich das Osmanische Reich zeitweilig zum „Japan des Nahen Ostens“ stilisierte, bot der Bezug auf Japan die Möglichkeit zu heterogener Verwendung: So konnte z.B. im Anschluss an den Gedanken einer mit Japan bestehenden panasiatischen Solidarität für die Einheit der osmanischen Bevölkerungsgruppen eingetreten werden, während gleichzeitig die wahrgenommene Homogenität der japanischen Nation Argumente für türkisch-nationalistische Gedanken lieferte und die Heterogenität des osmanischen Staatsvolks als Schwäche erschienen liess.

Wichtig ist Worringers Feststellung, dass die Essenz des japanischen Fortschritts häufig weniger in konkreten Modernisierungsschritten als vielmehr in der moralischen Stärke und im Patriotismus der japanischen Bevölkerung ausgemacht wurde. Abgesehen von Appellen an persönliche Initiative und Opferbereitschaft sowie die Einheit der Nation gab diese Einsicht Anlass zu Überlegungen, wie durch eine Reform des Erziehungssystems die patriotische Einstellung der osmanischen Jugend gewährleistet werden könnte. Hinsichtlich des konkreten Aussehens solch einer patriotischen Erziehung und der Rolle der Religion in derselben konnten die Meinungen dann auseinandergehen.

Den Stimmen aus Ägypten ist am Ende des zweiten Teils ein eigenes Kapitel gewidmet, wobei jene wiederum in diejenigen ägyptischer Nationalisten und solche syrischer Emigranten unterschieden werden. Im Gegensatz zu den Osmanen waren die ägyptischen Nationalisten wie Muṣṭafā Kāmil in ihren Überlegungen zu Japan weniger an Fragen der Identität interessiert, sondern sahen Japan hauptsächlich als Modell für den Aufbau des eigenen Staates. Syrisch-



ägyptische (Presse-)Stimmen dagegen werden von Worringer vor allem dahingehend untersucht, wie sie unter Verweis auf Japan die Rolle der Religion in der Gesellschaft konzeptualisierten. Wieder wurde das japanische Modell zur Untermauerung sehr unterschiedlicher Positionen herangezogen, und radikalen Säkularisten (Ya'qūb Ṣarrūf, Fāris Nimr) wird hier u.a. der islamische Reformdenker Rašīd Riḍā gegenübergestellt. Insgesamt macht Worringer den ägyptischen Intellektuellen jedoch den Vorwurf, trotz ihrer unmittelbaren Erfahrung des britischen Imperialismus die imperialistischen Interessen Japans in Asien verkannt zu haben. Zu einer Zeit, als in Japan bereits Lord Cromers *Modern Egypt* (1908) rezipiert wurde, um daraus Schlüsse für die Kolonialisierung Koreas zu ziehen, lobte die Mehrzahl der ägyptischen Kommentatoren Japans wohlwollende Ko-reapolitik und verkannte den Imperialismus als ein rein westliches Phänomen. Hierzu muss kritisch angemerkt werden, dass eine positive Evaluation der japanischen *mission civilisatrice* auch in der westlichen Japanliteratur sehr verbreitet war und dass sich die ägyptischen Intellektuellen in ihrem Wissen über Japan natürlich hauptsächlich auf westliche Literatur stützen mussten. Das Anlegen der Standards eines konsequenten Anti-Imperialismus an die Ägypter erscheint vor diesem Hintergrund nicht wenig willkürlich.

An Fragen wie dieser zeigen sich einige generelle Probleme in Worringers ansonsten sehr aufschlussreicher Studie. Da Worringer nicht mit japanischsprachigen Quellen arbeitet und auch der euro-amerikanischen Japanliteratur wenig Beachtung schenkt, bleibt die Betrachtungsweise häufig einseitig in den Aussagen der osmanisch-türkischen und arabischen Quellen verhaftet, ohne dass diese in einen wirklich globalen Kontext gestellt werden. Wenn Worringer anmerkt, dass europäische und osmanische Sichtweisen auf Japan „sometimes differed considerably [...], even when both had access to the same information“ (S. 117), dann ist dies aufgrund des Fehlens tatsächlicher Vergleiche nicht immer überzeugend. Ebenso ist es problematisch, wenn Worringer z.B. zur Veranschaulichung muslimischer Begeisterung für Japan aus einer osmanischen Zeitung<sup>6</sup> zitiert, die sich aber wiederum auf ein französisches Blatt beruft (S. 127). An einigen Stellen ist die Argumentation zudem unsauber: Dafür, dass Japan zur Gewinnung von Verbündeten unter den Muslimen 1905/06 die Gerüchte um eine Konversion des Landes zum Islam befeuerte (S. 81) oder dass Sultan Abdülhamid II. tatsächlich um den Verlust seines Kalifentitels ausgerechnet an den japanischen Kaiser fürchtete (S. 100), können keine Belege erbracht werden. An solchen Stellen wird durch Worringer letztlich eine hierarchische Beziehung konstruiert zwischen den bereits expansionistische Ziele verfolgenden Japanern und den

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<sup>6</sup> *Bâlkân*, 19.01.1907.



gegenüber Japan naiven, Japan als Konsequenz missverstehenden Osmanen. Die grosse Gefahr ist hier, Japans erfolgreiche Modernisierung und dessen Vorbildfunktion für Asien zu überhöhen und somit die asiatische Identifikation mit Japan als quasi zwangsläufig erscheinen zu lassen. Zweifel wecken jedoch bereits einige in *Ottomans Imagining Japan* selbst zu findende Zitate, in denen Japan nicht alleine, sondern neben anderen – europäischen – Nationen als modellhaft genannt wird (S. 149, 157, 244). Auch nach dem Russisch-Japanischen Krieg stellte also die Hinwendung zum asiatischen Japan nur eines von zahlreichen Identifikationsangeboten für osmanische Reformer dar.

Dem Buch wäre insgesamt zu wünschen gewesen, dass es schon früher hätte erscheinen können. So erscheint beispielsweise die Auswahlbibliographie am Ende (die leider auch nicht alle in den Endnoten genannten Referenzen erfasst) in einigen Punkten nicht mehr ganz aktuell. Auch erwarten den mit den vorherigen Arbeiten Worringers vertrauten Leser letztlich wenige neue Erkenntnisse.

Trotz dieser Kritikpunkte hat Renée Worringer ein wichtiges Werk veröffentlicht, das bislang seinesgleichen sucht und das als Referenzwerk für die Herausbildung eines den Globus umfassenden Bewusstseins unter den Eliten des Osmanischen Reichs und des Nahen Ostens dienen kann. Es sei uneingeschränkt jedem empfohlen, der sich für aussereuropäische Geschichte sowie Prozesse der Globalisierung und Fragen asiatischer Modernisierung im langen 19. Jahrhundert interessiert.