parallel zu dem Buch den von Axel Michaels herausgegebenen Band "Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft" (München 1997) und eine allgemeine Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft, wie diejenige von Klaus Hock (1. Aufl. 2002 u. weitere) oder Hans G. Kippenbergs und Kocku von Stuckrads Band (München 2003) zu lesen. Das Buch ist im Stil der WBG Einführungsreihe mit breiten Rändern gesetzt, die Raum für Notizen lassen und einzelnen Abschnitten Schlagwörter zuweisen. Leider ist in der Kopfzeile auf Seite 139 ein Fehler unterlaufen, so dass das Japan Kapitel in der Kopfzeile dem Vereinigten Königreich zugeordnet wird. Harald Grauer

Venhorst, Claudia: Muslims Ritualising Death in the Netherlands. Death Rites in a Small Town Context. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2013. 161 pp. ISBN 978-0-643-90351-8. (Death Studies, 3) Price: € 29.90

Through the use of the key concepts practise, context, and meaning, Claudia Venhorst provides the reader a very well structured and impressively well-organised study on the ritual dynamics of death rites. The main research question focuses on which and how ritual "repertoires" emerge among Muslims. She goes further into analysing what ritual elements are significant to Muslims, which roles can be distinguished, what ritual beliefs are connected to these rites, and what the role of narratives is in the process of constructing ritual meaning to death. With a focus on the ritual cleansing and shrouding of the deceased, the author presents her study within the field of death rites in a context of migration; more specifically in the context of a small town in the Netherlands. Although she focuses on the "lived religion," Islamic scholarly rules and regulations are also briefly included in her discussion on Islamic death rites.

The author emphasises the diversity in the practise of death rites among Muslims in the small town context of Venlo, but seems to overlook the diversity within Islamic rules and regulations and among Islamic scholars with regard to this subject. The diversity, which emerges in this study, is not only a result of a migration setting and small town context, it can also be placed within the larger current scholarly discussions that occur among Islamic scholars. These scholars also emphasise more than once, that Islamic rituals are not "static." Although the author has explained not to focus on Islamic rules and regulations, she could have mentioned these discussions as current and very much of influence in the opinions individual Muslims hold.

On various occasions the author seems to be too brief, resulting in unclear and incorrect information, for example, in chapter 2, where the author sets out to a brief explanation of the ritual purification of the deceased. However brief this may be, it should be correct though. The *awra* is not simply the area from the navel to the knees, this should have been nuanced since the *awra* of a man and woman differ significantly. In its briefness, the author seems also to ignore the religiously based differences among Muslims in the performance of this ritual. Furthermore, the author does refer to a well-known collection of *fiqh* regulations of Al Azeri (which should be Al Jazeri) but she neglects the many nuances and schools of law Al Jazeri discusses. Since the author does not focus on the Islamic rules and regulations as set out in the *fiqh*, she might only have mentioned the nuances and differences here in a footnote while referring to Al Jazeri. But ignoring to mention it, neglects the diversity among scholars on this topic.

Another example of the author being to brief and thus incorrect is her statement that "as a rule women do not take part in the ritual of the funeral prayer." Again, understanding the author's focus on lived religion, she should have noted here that there is a large and lively discussion among scholars on the presence of women at burial rituals and thus acknowledging a diversity of opinions without discussing them thoroughly. Choosing to overlook this reality in this study is a loss. Without dealing with these discussions exhaustively, the author would have added much more diversity on a different level to this impressive study.

The reader of this book is taken by the hand through a study on the dynamics of death rites among Muslims. The data shows interesting results and the respondents are of various backgrounds. This study, however, only focuses on the ritual of the purification and shrouding of the deceased. The other burial rituals are touched upon slightly, but not studied thoroughly. By focussing on the washing and shrouding, the author takes the reader into the depth of understanding and "mapping" the various elements of this ritual. For the reader who is interested in a thorough study on burial rituals among Muslims in a migration setting, this study may not be sufficient. For the reader who wants to be informed on the ritual dynamics and elements of the washing and shrouding, this work provides an excellent content and also challenges the reader to think further more on this subject. The focus on mapping and further development of theoretical approaches might sound a bit "raw," but the author does an excellent job in taking the reader by the hand through this journey. The book is well structured, with a clear introduction and overview in the first chapter. The following chapters are dedicated to the ritual elements, ritual roles, ritual beliefs, and ritual narratives. All chapters are set up in the same order, which makes them very readable. Although the conclusion seems to summarise and bring together what has already been said in the previous chapters, it also touches upon some interesting point for further research. A research which is very much still needed in this field. This work is a valuable addition to this genre of studies.

Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany

Walker, Anthony R.: Śākyamuni and G'ui˛sha. Two Essays on Buddhism in the Lahu and Wa Mountains. Fribourg: Academic Press, 2014. 153 pp. ISBN 978-3-7278-1739-7. (Studia Instituti Anthropos, 54) Price: € 50.00

The pool of scientists working on the so-called Highland Tribes of Southeast Asia is very small, so small in fact, that for young aspiring scientists in this field it is just as important to know who is studying what as it is to know about the object of study itself. One of the most renowned scientists in this small pool, Anthony Walker

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(a household name for anyone working in the field), in this book presents two essays on the religious traditions of the Lahu (and in the second essay also the Wa) people, and more specific, on the roots of some of their religious traditions which he sees as influenced by a), the Theravāda Buddhism of the Lowland peoples, and b), the Mahāyāna Buddhism of their original place of settlement, southern China.

The book type (an essay collection with only two entries, one of which is a mere 21 pages long) seems surprising at first, but makes sense if you see it (as the author does) as showing the evolution of a research. The first and shorter essay (a reprint previously published in the *Journal of the Siam Society*) is based on fieldwork done in the late 1960s and shows how Walker discovered the Lahu People in northern Thailand, who kept temple structures that were designated to the creator divinity G'ui˘sha, but also incorporated Buddhist architecture, iconography (of birds), and rituals akin to merit-making days. These could have been easily attributed to syncretisms and borrowings from neighboring Tai polities with their ritual-animistic versions of Theravāda-Buddhism, and many ethnologists might have left it as that. But Walker discovered a rich corpus of Chinese sources which deal with the history of the Lahu and their reception of Mahāyāna Buddhism by travelling (missionary) monks from Dali (Binchuan County). Analyzing these, he is able to show that some of the religious phenomena in the Lahu society might be remnants from a Mahāyāna-Buddhist past, which is no longer remembered in full and has been suffused with local legends and customs, one of which is the appropriation of the creator divinity G'ui˘sha with the "historical Buddha" Śākyamuni.

The second essay (previously unpublished) picks up the Chinese-language sources and expands on the history of the establishment of Buddhist temple organization in the Lahu (and Wa) settlement areas of southern China as can be gleaned from these. It is thus the natural consequence of the first essay by showing how the author delved deeper into the history of Mahāyāna-Buddhist affiliations of which the previous ethnographic study merely showed the consequences. First, the historical context is established by relating the incidents, which led to the arrival of Buddhism in the lands of the Lahu and Wa. One was the migration of Han-Chinese into the surrounding lowlands. The second was a decidedly political one: imperial China replaced its indirect rule of the land (by tributary headmen) with a more direct form of control by Chinese officials. Then, the arrival of monks and the establishment of monastic temple complexes are retold, who then (through alleged disciples of the first monks) create a body of satellite temples, which not only provide Buddhist instruction and liturgy but also function as supra-village political units, where (on occasion) the monks are not only revered as masters of religion and healing but also as entities of supernatural power and political administrators. Walker also shows how these revered monks and the Buddhist architecture and rituals live on today by retelling legendary accounts of their lives and describing temples and religious festivities.

This book shows four important things: first, how fruitful an approach of mixed methodology can be if applied to a scientific topic. By augmenting his anthropological surveys with the thorough reading of Chinese sources about the Lahu and Wa, which he cross-reads and places in the historical context of the time, Walker is able to give a detailed picture of several aspects of the Buddhism that has spread here and the consequences of its arrival, which remain in the orally transmitted legends of the hill people even after many of them had migrated to the surrounding nation-states. Second, this book provides a new twist on the idea of the Buddhist polity as it is often imagined in connection with the hill tribes. Often the Buddhist polities of the lowlands are seen as the opposite or different from the "animistic" hill people, who are in constant strife with the "Buddhist nationalism" of the lowland nation-states, so much that the hill tribes allegedly rather convert to Christianity than acculturate to their fold. Walker shows here that Buddhism (albeit of a different variety) could function as a rallying point for political resistance just as well as (on occasion) the monks led rebellions against the Tai principalities or the imperial Chinese rule. Third, it shows that the spread of Buddhism (or missionary Buddhism), which is often depicted as the preaching of peacefully wondering monks, could also take on a decidedly political tone which opens up new perspectives on this phenomenon. Fourth, this book breaks up the imagined border between East- and Southeast Asia, which has been established by the splitting of the two between two area studies. And this, once again shows the fruitfulness of a comparative approach transcending national borders and culture spheres.

The small group of people specifically interested in highland cultures of Southeast Asia will probably already have taken notice of this publication. So, instead it should be recommended to all historians of religion (as the author does himself in the preface) working on the "larger" religions of China and Southeast Asia. These essays highlight the interconnectedness between traditional/non-Buddhist religious expressions, Mahāyāna and Theravāda that exists in this area but is overlooked too often. As it can also be seen as a condensed version of Walker's longer study of the Lahu religion "Merit and the Millenium. Routine and Crisis in the Ritual Lives of the Lahu People" (New Delhi 2003), it is the ideal sourcebook for those working on these connections.

Although this book can be recommended wholeheartedly, there are two small critical observations to be made. One is that the author seems to be looking for Mahāyāna Buddhism so decidedly, that many expressions of Lahu religiosity are viewed from this "great tradition" thus labeling many phenomena as mere syncretisms of something bigger. This degrades Lahu religion to something merely created by larger traditions surrounding it and deprives it of its legitimacy as a religious expression in its own right. This is probably not the author's intention, but should be mentioned nonetheless. Furthermore, some observations made want to see Mahāyāna Buddhism as the sole source of some traditions whereas there might be other, equally valid explanations. For example, the au-

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thor sees the fact that "priests" of the Lahu temples are married as a clear influence from Mahāyāna, as there is a tradition here of non-monastic clergy. An equally valid explanation would be that subsistence economies (such as many "highland" peoples in Southeast Asia still are) cannot support a full-time (monastic) clergy that is why nearly everywhere in the region religious experts are also farmers and live a normal family life. Apart from that, children, fertility, and patri- or matrilineages are very important in this context and could also account for the low desirability of a celibate lifestyle.

Lauren Drover

Whitehead, Neil L., and **Sverker Finnström** (eds.): Virtual War and Magical Death. Technologies and Imaginaries for Terror and Killing. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013. 290 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-5447-5. Price: $ 24.95

This collection of essays is mainly comprised of papers originally presented in a session of the same title at the 2009 American Anthropological Association meetings in Philadelphia (PA, USA), organized by the editors and Koen Stroeken. "Virtual War" is composed of an introduction by the editors and eleven essays by anthropologists who have distinguished themselves as analysts of violence and contemporary politics.

The editors' introduction frames the volume with two general perspectives. First, they situate contemporary killings into the increasingly "virtual spaces" of warfare, writing that these are "created by news and cinematic and gaming media as well as the mediating and mapping technologies of contemporary military violence – such as airborne attack drones, satellite surveillance from space, stealth airplanes and helicopters, nightvision equipment, and the associated use of politically covert assassination operations" (1). They urge that these spaces can profitably be analyzed by recognizing the "blending of the 'techno-modern' and 'magico-primitive'" (6), arguing that by doing so one can apply to analytic advantage more traditional ethnographic categories like witchcraft, magic, and sorcery. The editors secondly advise anthropologists, and thus their contributors, that they must "first and foremost … remain engaged and self-reflexive observers …" (11). Despite these two desiderata, the editors did not ask their contributors to follow a common framework. The result is an engaging but theoretically and empirically uneven collection.

In chap. 1, Neil L. Whitehead challenges what he describes as professional assumptions about the nature of ethnography and ethnographic knowledge. Arguing that the epistemological character of ethnography has been shaped, perhaps deformed, by its relationship with state power, one might ask if there is only one such relationship, but that is not a question which Whitehead engages. Rather, he moves directly to considering the ways in which ethnography, and perhaps especially the ethnographic interview is not just like torture but *is* actual torture. He concludes with a brief hortatory section about anthropologists' responsibilities in relation to the militarization of many aspects of the contemporary world, including humanitarian, emergency, police, and peacekeeping operations.

The specter of the United States Army's Human Terrain System (HTS) haunts the entire volume. Chapters 2, 3, and 4, by David Price, Roberto J. González, and R. Brian Ferguson engage HTS directly. Price considers in chap. 2 the historical roots of the HTS and pays particular attention to the work of Montgomery McFate, the anthropologist most responsible for its development. Price is at pains to excavate the colonial and counterinsurgency ideas that animated McFate's work, reaching back to her doctoral dissertation and beyond.

Roberto J. González shifts the discussion somewhat in chap. 3 by considering the implications of the use of the technologies of role playing, video gaming, and the use of computer-based modeling by the United States Department of Defense. González raises concerns about the implications of social scientists' involvement in the development of such programs and calls for a more "critical and relevant social science" (83).

In chap. 4, R. Brian Ferguson extends the analysis of the HTS that he began developing elsewhere, and turns his attention explicitly to the effects anthropology has as a discipline that might follow from the Department of Defense's turn toward culture and anthropology. Like Price, Ferguson begins with McFate, but he moves on to consider other Department of Defense related anthropologists (however, some only by implication), and military officers as he catalogs the ways in which concepts of culture and the social have been used and abused by militaries. The final section of Ferguson's article details the ways in which the Department of Defense's efforts will deform academics, from the militarization of campuses, through the distortion of funding, to the corruption of research agendas.

Sverker Finnström turns the volume's ethnographic attention to Uganda revisiting what he describes as "a few months of intensive fieldwork conducted in late 2005" (111) in chap. 5. He discusses that fieldwork, but shifts to discussing what he calls human terrain mapping (though this *is not* the HTS of Price, González, and Ferguson) as a way of connecting to witchcraft and the United States' Africa Command (which was not established until 2007).

In chap. 6, Antonius C. G. M. Robben considers how the technology of night vision transformed the battle space in Vietnam and Iraq. He considers the link between these technologies (there are two types of night vision discussed) and swarming tactics. These lead to the creation of certain kinds of imaginaries both for the civilian population and those in the military.

Chap. 7 by Robertson Allen returns us firmly back to virtual reality through the window of the U.S. Army's video game "America's Army." He explores the ways in which the development team was recruited and shaped through "five days of 'mini Basic Combat Training'" (161). Allen's purpose is to explore the ways in which video games contribute to the militarization of society generally.

Jeffrey A. Sluka considers the disconnect between the hype and reality of drone warfare in Afghanistan – its cost

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