

are epistemologically entirely different. Århem also does not argue the general applicability of this principle. The assumption of a protective effect of sacred forests has been critically discussed before, partially because many of these prohibited areas are rather small. Those of the Katuic groups are unusually large, and their moral authority over humans seems unusually severe.

Although Århem analyzes the effects of resettlement and road building on the Vietnamese villages, state relations and “high modernity” – a term taken from James Scott – move to the fore in his discussion of the consultancy fieldwork he conducted for a sustainable forestry project in Laos. While this material, presented in chapters 8 and 9, initially seems disconnected to the rest of the book, it is here that his argument becomes most convincing. The project demanded making clear distinctions between natural and cultural zones of village land. Protection of old-growth forest contrasted with production forests and land used by the village. However, the zoning did not consider the differentiated and processual relationships villagers have with their forests. Both spirit forests and fallows in different phases of growth are important sources of forest products, making a separation of agricultural land, land with spiritual importance, and forests mostly meaningless. But the failure of the project was not only located on the conceptual level. Forestry officials in charge of getting villagers’ compliance to the project knew well that village participation had been reduced by the Government of Laos to the mere supplication of labor. Also, they had to protect their income from other, more destructive logging companies. Thus, villagers were all too often only incompletely and misleadingly informed of the project’s goals. Analytically, both the ontological and the political ecological approaches complement each other here in a single, forceful argument. Århem renders a complex and fascinating picture of cosmologies, classifications, hegemonies, and personal agencies that produce a rather destructive effect.

The theoretical implications of this are not fully elaborated. In some formulations, Århem comes close to an attitude that valorizes indigenous knowledge only because it holds up to a comparison with scientific knowledge, as if the latter provided the gold standard for knowledge anywhere. At the same time, referencing Philippe Descola and Tim Ingold, he maintains that Katuic cosmology and the European nature-culture divide are fundamentally different. This point could have been pursued further, even beyond the apparent dualism. Still, this does not diminish the force of the ethnographic argument.

The volume has probably proceeded a bit too quickly from dissertation thesis to book, and some editing and straightening up would have helped. However, in comparison to some theoretically much more elaborate recent work, the book is convincing in the way Århem makes his rich ethnography speak for itself. It is an important contribution to current studies of uplanders in Southeast Asia and provides a solid, engaging, and lucidly analyzed example of how local cosmologies and their relationships with high modernity can be brought together in a unified argument.

Guido Sprenger

Banton, Michael: *What We Now Know About Race and Ethnicity*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2015. 169 pp. ISBN 978-1-78238-603-2. Price: £ 63.00

Banton starts with a “paradox.” In 2002, the American Sociological Association issued a statement about the “importance of collecting data on race,” which declared that, although race was not a valid biological category, social data should still be collected using racial categories, for the purposes of monitoring the effects of social policy directed at correcting racial inequalities. To him, this paradox arises because social scientists do not properly separate out the domain of theoretical knowledge with its *etic*, analytic concepts from the domain of practical knowledge, with its *emic*, everyday concepts that serve to design and enact social policy and politics. He advocates starting with general theoretical problems, such as what motivates people to identify with and form relations with others, and engage in collective action. Social scientists should then examine the range of factors that shape these motivations, without making a priori assumptions about whether particular kinds of patterns and factors constitute a separate domain of “race” or “ethnic” relations and ideas.

At the end of the book Banton states: “[t]he overarching problem in this field is that of accounting for the social significance attributed to phenotypical differences among humans, compared with that attributed to cultural characteristics such as ethnic origin and socio-economic status” (155). This sounds like a statement many social scientists would sign up to: it delineates a field that is the historical and comparative study of *emic* concepts about human diversity, which vary across space and time. The problem, as Banton sees it, is that one subset of such *emic* concepts has been labelled as “race” by historians, social scientists, and philosophers (and another subset as “ethnicity”). The subset has little theoretical coherence, because experts cannot agree on which *emic* concepts to include in the subset. Humans have attached meanings to and accounted for observed human diversity, phenotypical and cultural, in very varied ways: as “phenotype” includes the entire physical organism, not just the specific aspects of it that have typically been associated with “race,” the field as defined by Banton is very broad.

But even restricting phenotype to those specific aspects (the differences in physical appearance that seem to correlate roughly with continental distribution of humanity, such as skin colour, hair type, and facial features), problems remain. Should the way the ancient Greeks or the ancient Chinese explained human diversity be classed as “racial” on the basis that there are elements of environmental determinism and ideas about human heredity involved? Should 17th-century ideas about human diversity be included as “racial” alongside late 19th-century ideas, when “biology” had not yet emerged as a discipline? Was medieval anti-Semitism a form of racism? Historians differ on these questions. Should current cultural fundamentalism, which separates humans into essentially different groups by virtue of their culture, be classed as a form of racism (cultural racism), when it appears to make no reference to biology or even phenotype? Is Zionism a form

of racism or nationalism? Is Islamophobia racism or religious intolerance?

The problem, according to Banton, is that despite this theoretical incoherence, people agree that racism is a moral evil, with roots in the politically toxic phenomena of colonialism, slavery, and Nazism, which needs to be addressed in politics and policy. Therefore, the political consensus at the emic level that racism is a problem drives the theoretical construction at an etic level of a field called race or race relations, which is then reified and gains institutional solidity. “Race” becomes something to be explained rather than a factor which may, alongside other factors, shape more general processes of human social interaction. (The same kind of argument applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to ethnicity.)

One has to agree with Banton that the field of race studies is incoherent: definitions of its boundaries are easy to pick holes in. Yet defining the problem of the field as “the social significance attributed to phenotypical differences among humans” is too broad. Social science needs to classify emic concepts about this into subcategories. Such etic classifications must be recognised as partial and permanently provisional and their usefulness assessed in terms of their theoretical power but also their political effects. Banton’s faith in the possibility of an entirely etic, analytic level, divorced from politics, policy, and the emic is misplaced and takes little account of the politics of knowledge production. The concepts he defines as etic – for example, reciprocity, relative deprivation, socio-economic status, social mobility (6) – are also rooted in a specific history and overlap with emic concepts. Indeed, the concept “phenotypical variation” is an excellent example of how a seemingly neutral, etic concept actually hides a specific history of emic meanings: as noted above, the phenotypical variations that get loaded with “racial” meanings are not just any physical differences, but ones that became significant in a history of European (and Arab) colonialism.

It makes sense not to reify race studies in ways that lead social scientists to separate out “race relations” as a specific kind of social relations, divorced from other relations. Banton is right to critique the way the peculiar US experience of race has shaped the field of race studies in ways that have encouraged such separation. But it also makes sense to identify a particular history of modes of thinking about human diversity, which culminated in the 19th and 20th centuries in a peculiar set of biological theories and in some peculiar social orders (e.g., the United States, South Africa), but which shaped large portions of the world in a powerful fashion. The roots and components of these kinds of racial thinking can be traced, as can their continued development and mutations. This does not add up to a theoretically watertight, etic, “culture-free” definition of a field, but rather depends on the idea of family resemblance between diverse forms of thought and action, which conjugate in varying ways aspects of physical appearance, internal essence, and behaviour; it also recognises that theory and politics are inevitably linked. The manner in which theorists trace resemblances has implications for politics and social policy. For exam-

ple, linking racial thinking to colonialism broadly conceived, rather than focusing primarily on slavery, while also emphasising that “race” is not just about meanings attributed to phenotype, implies including American indigenous peoples in the field of race studies, rather than locating them in the field of ethnicity.

Banton’s book is very thought-provoking: it made me think harder about the theoretical aspects of race and ethnicity than most books I have read recently on the topic. His willingness to challenge taken-for-granted theoretical stances is very bracing. There is also a lot of interesting information in this concise book, including material on the history of race and ethnicity studies that is highly relevant to understanding the field, but is often overlooked these days. His impressive mastery of the field gives readers a very informative and synthetic long and broad view, along with a coherent critique, which while it engages specialist academic also suits the book for an undergraduate audience. The critique is one that I sympathise with to some extent, but that I think is ultimately flawed.

Peter Wade

Bell, Joshua A., and Erin L. Hasinoff (eds.): *The Anthropology of Expeditions. Travel, Visualities, Afterlives.* New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2015. 286 pp. ISBN 978-1-941792-00-1. Price: \$ 65.00

This is an engaging collection of seven long essays, an introduction and afterword. Written by senior scholars, it provides a useful addition to the literature on a broad panoply of subjects including the motivations and methods behind assembling collections, their dispersals, institutionalisations and usages, and their digital re-mobilisation for empowering source communities. Kuklick raises some general questions around the organisation and purposes of expeditions within field sciences paying special attention to the way they established credibility through dispassionate, direct, and often singular observations. Their integrity, she insists, was further legitimated by their heroic and adventurous qualities. Through hardship and adversity, field studies were held to be character building and essential to the formation of the plausible witnesses through the heroic self-fashioning they demanded. Veracity and experience not only lead to rigorous and credible observation but also triggered the mental conditions necessary for empathic identification with foreign, often colonised, subjects. Kuklick acknowledges, like Bell and Turin, that, although seldom specified, many expeditions depended on pre-constituted networks and relationships that existed in colonial territories and I would add among national élites.

Although a number of contributors discuss ideals and motivations, Erik Mueggler’s article on Joseph Rock’s Expedition to Gansu focuses more acutely on the internal social relations and dynamics between expedition leaders and their members; in this case Rock’s Nazi bearers and preparators. Mueggler also discusses the mediation of gender categories and, in the expedition’s afterlife, the mobilisation of prestige. All these facets provide fascinating insights fundamental to the study of the cultures of expeditions. Mueggler’s reintroduction and application