In the current climate of mistrust and misunderstanding between the west and the Islamic east this book is both valuable and worthwhile. Through the contributions of an impressive group of social scientists and other writers it seeks to explore the lives of normal Muslims in the Middle East. It looks at the most mundane aspects of their ordinary lives from a refreshing variety of perspectives. And yet, despite its worthiness, it is a book that ultimately sets up as many obstacles as it manages to clear away. Instead of bringing the subject nearer to our own reality, the omissions and the underlying approach of the book seem to make it more distant.

The volume, first published in 1993, has been republished at an equally vexed period and therefore seems timely. Through thirty-five stories, poems and essays, the book focuses on the everyday lives of ordinary people, to ‘convey an intimate sense of life in the Middle East today’. The contributors read like a veritable who’s who of social science in the Middle East. Scattered among them are a handful of fictional and poetic works by authors such as Tayib Salih of Sudan, Emily Nasrallah of the Lebanon and Driss Chraibi of Morocco. Altogether an impressive assemblage.

The book is divided into five sections covering the main aspects of everyday life: generations and life passages; gender relations; home, community and work; popular expressions of religion; and performance and entertainment. Each section contains a broad variety of short articles, many dealing in brief with key issues explored in an author’s main publications: for instance, Abu-Lughod on the use of poetry among Bedu women in the Egyptian desert, Singerman on networks and politics in urban Cairo, and Friedl on attitudes to marriage among women in Iran. Most pieces are too short to give anything but the merest taste of the richness and complexities of the main works, but the aim is presumably to send the reader off to seek greater satisfaction with the originals. There are both real gems and curious inclusions here. Among the former are Chraibi’s poignant tale of a migrant’s return and Howard’s stories of the dedication of Sudanese school teachers. Among the latter are Davis’s somewhat trite observations on Moroccan childhood and the gushing, in-flight magazine offerings of Jansen on the Haj.

Of more concern than the variable quality of the contributions are two aspects of the book: the biases in the selection of the contributors and the omission of a key aspect of Middle Eastern life. A quick assessment of the list of contributors shows that over two thirds come from academic institutions in the United States. The quality of some of these contributors only serves to highlight those who have been left out, particularly Europeans and social scientists based in the region itself. The selection of contributors would also seem to have guided the rather odd geographical definition of the Middle East that is used. The area described in the book is huge, stretching from Morocco in the west to Pakistan in the east, Turkey in the north to Sudan in the south. And yet, the heart of this region – Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates – is missing. The absence of the religious, cultural and economic heart of the region gives the book a strangely lop-sided feel, and a real sense of the biases of the editors.

The other significant omission is migration, both immigration into the Middle East, and particularly to the Gulf countries, and emigration from the region, particularly to the United States and western Europe. Many of the contributions mention migration as an aside. All of them, however, leave out the presence of migrants: the Egyptian teachers and doctors, the Sri Lankan maids, the Filippino shop assistants and Indian drivers who make much of everyday life in the Middle East possible. While some of the contributions, such as Chraibi’s tale of return,
consider emigrant communities, none looks in detail at the huge influence that these communities have on their homes. This omission reinforces ideas of the region as isolated and backward, lacking links to the rest of the world. It also reinforces the treatment of Middle Eastern life as an object of study, rather than an empathetic exploration of the lives of our fellow citizens and neighbours.

In conclusion, though, it should be said that it is easy to criticise such exercises, far harder to put together something that will satisfy everybody. Any selection will be open to condemnation of some sort, although in this case the biases detract from what would otherwise be a superb introduction to the region.

FRANCIS WATKINS
University of Edinburgh, UK


This volume by Alfred Crosby intentionally casts a wide net and offers a polemical view. Its focus is on the combination of ‘throwing’ and ‘fire’: that is, on the fusion of accurate hurling and the manipulation of fire and (later) explosives as unique human capabilities. Crosby writes for a general audience and not for members of a particular discipline such as anthropology. His aim in this volume is to chart a particular trajectory of evolutionary development and preoccupation with projectiles and combustion, and to see how this trajectory has expressed itself in various human epochs and endeavours. He is careful to point out, where possible, not only the kinds of knowledge that were developed during these periods but also their ‘carriers’ and the relevant social and historical contexts within which ‘throwing fire’ developed. Throughout the volume he makes a judicious use of evidence from a variety of disciplines – archaeology, anthropology, history, rocket science, physics, chemistry, strategic studies – in a manner that is very accessible to people outside any given branch of scholarly study. In short, the volume is very well written and engaging.

It is divided into what Crosby sees as three major ‘accelerations’ in the development of ‘throwing fire’. The first occurred in prehistory with the progression by humans from throwing rocks to the use of spears, atlatls (spear throwers) and bows and arrows. Humans also learned to use fire for cooking, driving game, burning rivals and altering landscapes. His contention is that these capabilities probably played a central role in the extinction of many species. The second acceleration occurred in historical times with the invention of catapults, trebuchets and a variety of flammable liquids. Following these developments, humans invented gunpowder, which then led to guns and rockets and the literal ‘throwing’ of ‘fire.’ It was gunpowder technology, Crosby argues, following a long line of historians, that accelerated the rise of empires and the domination of the world by the European powers. The third acceleration occurred in the twentieth century with the development of the V-2 rocket and the atomic bomb. These advances underlay the growth of space travel and in the final analysis, suggests Crosby, the destructive potential of the atom bomb may also lead us to travel away from Earth and to migrate away from our self-destructive potential.

As with any volume devoted to a particular aspect of human development the book is limited in its focus and one can argue with many of its contentions. For example, Crosby offers an interesting hypothesis about the innate fascination of humans with effecting change at a distance through the use of projectiles or fire (or their combination) and with what he terms ‘humanity’s primordial fascination with fire and thunderclap’ (p. 105). In this manner, Crosby seems to be ‘blind’ to cultural influences on such fascination. One example is related to the space-age competition between the United States and the Soviet Union which began in the late 1950s. To be sure, this competition centred on the desire of leaders of the countries to achieve international pre-eminence and secure a new frontier (marked by security considerations). But the struggle between the two great powers was also an outcome of deep cultural assumptions about the centrality of modernisation and the progress that could be brought about by technology. Theoretically speaking, Crosby seems to assume that the underlying compulsion to develop bows and arrows, rockets and missiles is human nature; he does not give enough place to the ways in which cultural models have served to intensify and channel such desires. Yet this limitation is precisely the volume’s strength: it succeeds in charting the thread of development of projectiles and explosion. As such, this is a systematic, well-written and engaging exploration of the ways in which humans have thrown fire.

EYAL BEN-ARI
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel
This is a nicely produced and reasonably priced collection of recent ethnographic forays into Welsh communities. There are eight studies, an introduction and conclusion, and a foreword by Ronald Frankenberg. Most contributions stem from an Anthropology Wales/Anthropoleg Cymru annual conference, and all exemplify a reflexive anthropology ‘at home’. The contributors themselves live and work in Wales.

Good anthropological texts, like good novels, can help us understand society, remarks Ronald Frankenberg in his foreword, but do not suppose that human behaviour can ever be fully and definitively explained by writers in either genre. Neither Welshness nor community are essentialised, fixed things-in-themselves because the social world is not made up of fixed boundaries, of things that could be known fully and definitively; rather, its ill-defined and shifting elements deal in diversity, contradiction and irony, across semi-permeable membranes.

The Frankenbergian perspective is embodied most cogently in Janice Williams’s essay on vegetarianism in a rural west Wales village whose recently changing social composition has made diet a significant issue in local social relations. Describing the narratives of self that people compose as they traverse the life-cycle, Williams conveys vegetarianism as an internally heterogeneous category of devotees that relates in complex fashion to community ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’.

Nonetheless, Frankenberg does propose a kind of definition of ‘community’: it is an abbreviation of ‘community of interest’. And he does offer a kind of prescription: love, hatred and gossip are the raw materials of community, while indifference, neutral silence and unshared values are its enemies. This style is taken on by Charlotte Aull Davies, in her volume introduction. However permeable, overlapping and indistinct are its boundaries, community, she explains, encapsulates several interrelated elements central to people’s experience of social life: place and locatedness, shared interests and shared identity.

‘Place’ as against ‘interests’ divides the remainder of the contributors and their analytic focus. On the place side, Martin O’Neill describes how neighbours remain a significant symbolic resource in the Swansea east-side, and how space is an important principle still in the structuring of social relations. De Murphy recounts how a loose collectivity of tenants in ‘The Field’ transformed itself into an organised and self-conscious community in order to fight the threat of developers and eviction. Stephanie Jones describes how, with deindustrialisation, community identity in Blaengwyn has been transmuted – for men and women alike – from an association with mining to one with a rugby team. And Emma Jones recounts how locals in three rural villages in south-west Wales used ‘belonging’ – the experiencing of community spirit – as a bargaining tool with incomers of higher socio-economic classes as a means of preserving their community social organisation.

On the interests side, Jeremy Segrott describes the new cosmopolitan ways of belonging to a Welsh community in London; cross-cut by class, gender, sexuality and generation, the London Welsh are not one homogenous community, but comprise mobile and decentralised networks. John Hutson recounts how the occupational culture of farming – its shared experience, skills and motivation – is in danger of dying. Continuing economic insecurity means that farming no longer provides a sense of well-being or achievement in either work or household, the only unity being one of resistance. And Sue Philpin describes how partaking in the ancient practice of ‘wool-measuring’ as a cure for depression in rural Welsh-speaking communities in mid-Wales manifests the maintenance of a shared belief system and locates people relative to a Welsh heritage.


After being first translated by Peter Prifti in 1979 and drifting since then from library to library and archive to archive in manuscript form, Stavre Frasheri’s Through Mirdita in winter has finally been published. The text, written shortly after an expedition headed by the physical anthropologist Carleton S. Coon (1904–81) to the Mirdite region of central Albania in late 1929 by his guide and interpreter, was first published in 1930 in Korça in southern Albania. It is one of the ironies of life that
Coon had to wait over twenty years to see his own publication deriving from this and two other expeditions printed in *The mountains of giants* (1950). Ideally, both books should be read together as they tell the same story. *Through Mirdite in winter* can be read on several levels. It is first of all an ethnographic work: of the twenty relatively short chapters, nineteen are model ethnographic descriptions that discuss local origins, social organisation, hospitality, wedding and funeral customs, and so on. Despite a general lack of depth in the description – which is to be expected considering it is only about 75 pages long – its volume is remarkable. Every sentence is overflowing with raw information. Buried in the midst of this ethnography is the description of the expedition itself (Ch. 10). Frasheri comes alive here as a storyteller, describing vividly the expedition, the suspicious reactions of the population to Coon; his attempts at measuring them; his wife, Mary, who challenged local custom by mixing randomly male and female modes of dress and behaviour; the countryside; and the people and their often abject misery. It complements the ethnographic part perfectly, to the point of surpassing the ethnography in ethnographic content. One is left wishing that Frasheri had dedicated more than the 25 pages he did to this witty, often ironic and emotionally charged narrative.

On another level, *Through Mirdite in winter* reflects a certain discrepancy in the feelings Albanians have towards their own history and culture that still exists today. On the one hand, one senses a pride in the brave and noble tradition that the people of Mirdite, representative for all Albanians, uphold; on the other hand, Frasheri – and much of the local population that he lets speak – see the need for a strong government and education to help the local population out of their situation of poverty, ‘lawlessness’ and both extreme class and gender inequality. In this sense, the book is a witness to a very moving time in Albanian history. Frasheri, the English-speaking teacher – quite likely foreign-educated and socialist-oriented – is reporting on his own and the local population’s hopes and expectations of the country’s first really stable autochthonous government, under the self-proclaimed King Zog.

Frasheri’s account is flanked by secondary material of which a foreword by Carleton Coon, written in 1979, needs to be mentioned explicitly. He provides the story with some important context, but above all seems to have felt the need to comment on his own caricatured role in Frasheri’s narrative, somewhere between a bumbling professor and a witless foreigner. He takes it with style. But this edition and translation of *Through Mirdite in winter* is also witness to missed opportunities and the product of embarrassing carelessness on the part of the editors and publisher. The manuscript could easily have used another precise reading before going to print: not only is there inconsistency in spelling (socks and the colloquial *sox* being the most obvious) but words are misspelled and on occasion even missing; the glossary, although well intended, is incomplete; and the footnotes seem to be placed at random, are often redundant and on occasion simply inaccurate or badly researched.

This last point is the greatest source of disappointment in this case, since the translation, and the field of Albanian Studies in general, would have benefited greatly if this historical document had been provided with a more detailed introduction and commentary. A discussion of the deeper lying motivations and institutions that Frasheri describes so beautifully would have done the author, the people he describes, and not least the reader, a service. As it stands, a reader not versed in the details of Albanian (or at least Balkan) culture and history is left treading water in a flood of ethnographic detail without the structural framework in which to sort it. Despite these imperfections, *Through Mirdite in winter* is still to be recommended, as an ethnographic and historical source – and as an exciting and often amusing read.

ANDREAS HEMMING
Karl-Franzens University, Graz, Austria


Que signifie aujourd’hui ‘comparer’ pour les anthropologues, non seulement par rapport aux périodes précédentes, mais dans un contexte marqué par la globalisation? C’est à une exploration de cette question que nous convient Andre Gingrich et Richard G. Fox dans cet ouvrage issu d’une conférence organisée à Vienne en 1998. Le concept, et la pratique, de la comparaison sont-ils entièrement obsolètes dans un monde globalisé, ou au contraire peuvent-ils faire l’objet d’une réévaluation dynamique, d’une adaptation aux conditions contemporaines de l’anthropologie? C’est la seconde option qui est retenue par les
auteurs rassemblés ici par Gingrich et Fox, qui souhaitent présenter avec cet ouvrage ‘une riche pluralité de méthodes comparatives qualitatives’.

Rejetant d’emblée une conception traditionnelle et quantitative de la comparaison (issue des sciences dures), comme méthodologie cohérente ayant vocation à dégager des lois, régularités ou étapes de développement, applicables ‘à toute culture ou à l’humanité en général’, les articles rassemblés ici sont organisés selon trois parties distinctes: la première explore les liens entre la comparaison et la responsabilité publique de l’anthropologie; la deuxième s’intéresse à un réexamen des méthodes passées, tandis que la troisième suggère des pistes nouvelles pour une pratique comparative actualisée.

Une des dimensions intéressantes de cet ouvrage est de montrer à quel point les enjeux théoriques de l’anthropologie, et les débats auxquels ils donnent lieu, sont ancrés dans des traditions nationales, influencés par les configurations politico-étatiques dans lesquelles sont menées les recherches (Kuper), ou l’aspiration des chercheurs à s’inscrire dans telle ou telle sphère de reconnaissance institutionnelle internationale (de Wolf). Le dialogue et l’explicitation de ces traditions sont d’ailleurs un des objectifs de l’ouvrage, à travers une diversité des supports de réflexion sur la comparaison: art africain (Fillitz), droits de l’homme (Hastrup), parenté (Desveaux).

Dans leur critique des anciens modèles et leur volonté de rechercher de nouveaux fondements à des démarches comparatives, certains auteurs insistent, ce qui n’est pas nouveau, sur la potentialité critique de la comparaison, comme outil de remise en cause de ce qui pourrait autrement paraître ‘aller de soi’ pour l’anthropologue travaillant dans sa propre société (Toren), ou comme outil critique de modèles d’analyse par trop ethnocentriques, comme celui qui a longtemps dominé à propos de l’art africain (Fillitz). D’autres plaident en faveur d’un usage plus grand des connaissances et de la capacité de relativisation, acquises par les anthropologues dans leurs recherches, dans leurs pratiques et engagements professionnels ‘chez eux’ (Peacock). Ce que ce dernier appelle ‘la comparaison pour l’action’ (action comparison), qui pourrait permettre de donner une ‘utilité sociale’ non seulement à l’approche anthropologique, mais aussi aux anthropologues eux-mêmes.

Les auteurs rassemblés ici semblent cependant éprouver quelques difficultés à se confronter avec certains points aveugles de la démarche comparative, et notamment la question, ô combien délicate, de la délimitation des ‘entités’ à comparer. Tous plaident en faveur de la contextualisation, comme ce qui permet à la fois de saisir des particularités et de dégager des similarités; beaucoup insistent sur le fait qu’il ne s’agit pas de comparer des cultures ou des objets en tant que tels, mais bien des ‘processus de construction de sens’ ou des ‘circuits de signification’. Mais le lecteur reste un peu sur sa faim dès lors qu’il s’agit de trouver au fil des pages une problématisation un peu poussée de notions telles que celles de ‘local’ ou ‘de culture’, ou encore des relations entre ce que la littérature anglo-saxonne dénomme ‘field’ et ‘home’. Ainsi, certains auteurs semblent ignorer que les travaux menés sur des terrains ‘non exotiques’ (occidentaux) ne se réduisent pas aux études folkloristes, d’autres, en tentant de comparer terrains ‘géographiquement lointains’ et ‘proches’ paraissent regretter le temps des monographies villageoises extractives; et les articles soulignant la nécessité d’inclure dans une approche comparative la prise en compte des entrecroisements multiples caractérisant le monde contemporain (Fillitz), ou la manière dont diverses sociétés locales ou réseaux réagissent et interagissent avec les processus de globalisation, restent rares (Gingrich).

Cet ouvrage présente l’intérêt de rouvrir le débat sur la comparaison en anthropologie, son rôle, tant conceptuel et méthodologique que pratique. Dans leur variété, les articles qui le composent fournissent une base pour prolonger la discussion, et notamment celle quant aux distinctions entre une méthode comparative ancrée dans des ‘savoirs locaux’, et la production de savoirs situés.

Catherine Neveu
LAIOS, Paris, France


This collection of fifteen articles attempts to tackle a subject that is contentious and slippery. Such an attempt is in itself praiseworthy, especially as several of the contributors are not afraid to confront the unpleasant roles that anthropologists have themselves played in genocides. The contributions cover a wide variety of issues and a broad geographical and historical span. This makes it difficult at times to see the commonalities, but in general such a large focus is a strength as it shows
the breadth and complexity of the term genocide itself.

The title of the book, Annihilating difference, is a very concise characterisation of what genocide is about, as also discussed in Hinton's well-written introductory chapter. But genocide is also about 'creating difference', even if this difference is created post-mortem as Bowen hints in his chapter. In one of the strongest theoretical contributions to this volume, Schepers-Hughes shows how certain groups are turned into 'rubbish people' similar to Agamben's homo sacer or Balibar's homme jetable, a kind of existence not worthy of life. This process may take place in non-spectacular everyday practices in old age homes or along the United States–Mexican border area (Nagengast).

While several chapters are surprisingly lacking in ethnographic detail, others provide interesting new insights based on close empirical analysis. For example, Arnold gives an interesting analysis of the role of archaeology in legitimising the Nazi regime's ideology of autochthony, while Linke's provocative and rich analysis of public nudity in post-war Germany illustrates how the Nazi past returns like the real. However much they try to rebel against and distance themselves from their Nazi past, German left-wing youth use the same generic schemes, linking the body to nature, purity and authenticity, as Nazi ideology did. Taylor walks the fine line between instrumentalist ideas of political leaders manipulating poor peasants and culturalist explanations in his ethno-graphic exploration of the cultural meanings of torture and death in Rwanda 1994. Other commendable chapters are Shapiro-Phim's analysis of the aesthetics of violence and oppression in Cambodia under Pol Pot, Bringa's analysis of the development of genocide in Bosnia–Herzegovina, Schaff's evidence of the complicity of anthropologists in Nazi Germany and Nagengast's exploration of othering and border controls along the United States–Mexican border. On a more general level, Hinton's introduction and the final two chapters by Schepers-Hughes and Bowen provide some excellent reflections on the role that these different approaches to genocide may play.


Migration, Mujercitas and medicine men focuses on ‘religious and medical discourse, selfhood and gender identity, and the dynamics of belonging and everyday life in a colonia popular [poor suburb]’ (p. 3). In the early 1990s and during some shorter visits in 1997–9 Napolitano studied aspects of urban life in Guadalajara, Mexico. She addresses a fascinating array of topics including, for example, traditional medicine, gender, migration and growing up as a girl. In focusing her attention on urban aspects the author redirects the attention of the scholarly community from the exotic rural and international law and not from social science. And whereas law is supposed to find the responsible individuals and clarify questions of guilt, anthropology’s main task is to understand how and why genocide occurs, and to analyse its effects. In the final chapter, Bowen has some excellent reflections on the role that these different approaches to genocide may play.

Although there are many interesting comments along these lines, several chapters seem to blur the lines between humanitarian law and anthropological research in a less constructive manner. In this sense, they tend to ‘document’ genocidal violence in various locations rather than attempt to understand how and why such violence takes place. Although such documentation is valuable in combating genocide, it is my opinion that human rights organisations do the job better (with their strict norms of verifying data etc.), and these chapters betray the proclaimed objective of the book. Similarly, their attempts to define genocide in ever finer categories overlook the fact that the term is used by political actors themselves to legitimise their own actions. Thus, the term génocidaire has become a powerful and highly contested floating signifier in Burundi and Rwanda, where everyone is accusing their opponents of committing genocide.

All in all, however, this is a book that contributes to documenting the varied and complex nature of genocide. It should be interesting reading for students, human rights workers and academics.

SIMON TURNER
Roskilde University, Denmark
indigenous communities of Mexico to the urban and mestisised poor that form the majority of Mexico’s population. This topic is highly relevant and certainly deserves very close anthropological attention.

The book is composed of an introduction and six chapters. In ‘Prisms of belonging and alternative modernities’ (the introduction) the author describes in very personal terms her way into the field and the struggles needed to write the book. Chapter 1 summarises historical, geographical and other background data on the barrio. The experience of migration and its impact on a person’s feeling of belonging is explored in chapter 2, which shows that many people do not feel really at home in the colonia. ‘Religious discourses and the politics of modernity’ then looks at micro-politics especially as they relate to the role of the local Catholic church. This is followed by a chapter focusing on medical options and the way people use institutional and non-conventional health. In chapter 5 the author discusses growing up as a girl in the colonia and the rites of passage associated with the quinceañera (fifteenth birthday celebrations). She shows beautifully that this indicates the start of a period which, for the girl, is full of illusions and dreams. In the final chapter the data presented previously are discussed and integrated. A final epilogue again looks at the subjectivity of the author’s research and at her integration into the culture of the colonia.

All the core chapters of the book explore areas central to understanding Mexican society: gender, health and medicine, religion and rapid societal transition. The book provides a fascinating and very well-written snapshot of these developments. The introductory chapter is an honest and open description of the author’s own transformation from a young student of anthropology to someone writing a book about her fieldwork experiences. Importantly, she states that the book is not an ethnography or anthropological study of a barrio (p. 2), but one looking specifically at the topics mentioned above. This introduction is essential for understanding the transformation of the author. Napolitano discusses in detail the limitations of her approach especially with respect to her own subjectivity, but I wonder whether her comments on the subjective and partial nature of research will really be news to many anthropologists. All of us in anthropology (and, of course, all of us who have worked in Mexico) are aware that each study provides a more or less detailed snapshot of a topic or a region. Some of the author’s statements in her introductory chapter seem rather trivial to me: for example, in her discussion of the incorporation of such a poor neighbourhood into a dominant and hierarchical society she states ‘the process of appropriation is very much open-ended’ (p. 13).

Urban anthropology in Mexico has, on the other hand, so many under- or un-investigated aspects that in my personal view any detailed anthropological study should contribute not only to the theoretical development of the field but also to an understanding of and possible resolutions to the problems of urban Mexico (or any other country). Wouldn’t a more detailed analysis of socio-economic changes and the pressure on such a population be much more revealing and relevant to the urban poor? While the book is rich in ethnographic description of gender-related issues in urban Mexico, I feel that Napolitano has somewhat watered down her arguments by stressing too much the limitations of her (and anyone else’s) subjective approach. Also, I would have liked to see a more thorough review of the anthropological literature on urban anthropology published in Spanish. For example, the work by R. Campos Navarro (Nosotros los curanderos, Mexico: Editorial Nueva Imagen, 1997) would have been essential for her arguments, since he addresses many of the issues she raises. Nevertheless, this is a very well-written, interesting book, which provides a stimulating and personal account of gender issues in urban Mexico.

MICHAEL HEINRICH
University of London, UK


This is a festschrift in honour of Charles Leslie, whose work has had a major influence in shaping current medical anthropology. The volume presents a number of cutting-edge essays in medical anthropology drawing on Leslie’s intellectual heritage. It also celebrates his work as an editor, notably for Social Science and Medicine, his practical work to carry the tradition of medical anthropology forwards and his commitment to an anthropology sensitive to the politics of modern cosmopolitan biomedicine and the ethical issues they raise. The ‘passion he inspired in his co-workers and students’ comes through the various contributions.
Much of medical anthropology has spent its fledgling years in the shadow of bio-medicine, whose script is that of rational science progressing to free the world from disease and suffering. According to this script, local and traditional systems of healing will inevitably disappear as their practitioners and patients realise the benefits and power of bio-medicine. Much of medical anthropology is forced into the mould of describing and cataloguing traditional systems of suffering and healing with reference to western biomedicine. Leslie has been a key contributor in releasing the profession from this script. His contributions to comparative studies of medical traditions, together with his perspectives on the globalisation of health care, have produced an approach to medical anthropology that sees all medical traditions and bodies of medical knowledge as dynamic and changing as a result of economic and political factors. The fact that ‘western’ or ‘modern’ or ‘cosmopolitan’ biomedicine is backed by global capital, does not confer automatic epistemological privilege. Rather, ‘western’ medicine becomes only one in a plurality of healing systems, and its particular form and relationships to other medical traditions is context-dependent and shaped by particular constellations of local and global economic and political factors. The job of anthropology is to produce meaning-centred ethnographies of particular medical knowledges and practices and their interactions, situated in fields of economic and political forces. This perspective on medical anthropology presents its practitioners with a fruitful set of theoretical tools, and also ethical issues inevitably thrown up by the challenge of negotiating the power around which medical politics revolves.

The volume opens with an editorial introduction tracing Leslie’s intellectual career, ‘From documenting medical pluralism to critical interpretations of globalised health knowledge, policies and practices’. It starts the story with the Wenner-Gren symposium held in 1971, from which the volume Asian medical systems. A comparative study was produced, and highlights key meetings and publications where main themes in Leslie’s work have been articulated and developed. The introduction is followed by chapters by anthropologists who acknowledge their debt to Leslie. All papers take a critical and in some cases activist stance in relation to the effects of globalisation of health care, and focus in various ways on global and local pluralism in medical knowledge and practice.

The chapters contain engaging, challenging and situated accounts of healing and illness prevention practice, at various levels of analysis. Roseman describes ritual dancing as a way to manage economic and political exclusion and displacement among Temiars, Malaysia. Nichter compares ways in which economic realities shape social responses to individuals’ illness in an Indian and a Philippine community. Ferzaccha sets out how ‘traditional’ medicine is translated and accommodated as a mechanism of citizen control in the realities of new order Indonesia. Pigg gives an account of how an Aids prevention campaign was, to much public consternation, caught up in the socio-economic dynamics of modern Nepal. Bibeau and Pedersen describe a return to scientific racism in work on sexual transmission of Aids in Africa and suggest ethnography as a rigorous and practically useful alternative to politically and ideologically fuelled speculation about African sexuality. Jeffery and Jeffery provide a similar perspective on the politically charged question of the demography of Indian Muslim and Hindu populations. Adams explores politically-charged meanings of ‘science’ as seen in the practices of individual practitioners of contemporary Tibet. Young and Lock provide a perspective on evolutionary psychiatry and germline engineering, respectively. Trawick writes about how myth accomplishes the ‘change of mind’ among ordinary citizens in Sri Lanka ‘to fit the horrific circumstances’ of warfare.

Young’s and Lock’s inspiring accounts notwithstanding, I missed a rich and textured account of how the globalisation of medicine affects the detail of everyday practice in European or American medical systems. There is much to be had by including these settings in a comparative study of contemporary health systems, both for anthropology and for our ability to address current and pressing global issues in health care.

GURO HUBY
University of Edinburgh, UK


Ce livre, fruit d’une recherche de terrain menée entre 1984 et 1994 pour une thèse en théologie et anthropologie, est une étude de cas portant sur une communauté de San Francisco se réclamant de la

La construction du livre évoque le parcours menant une sorcière de son premier cours d’introduction à la magie jusqu’à son rituel d’initiation. Chaque chapitre détaille un lieu particulier de transmission (cours d’introduction, fête saisonnière, camp d’été) et l’articule à une thématique: le chapitre 6, par exemple, expose la forme particulière que prend la fête d’Halloween dans cette communauté – un rituel spectaculaire voué au deuil public – ainsi que les conceptions de la mort et de l’après-mort. Le chapitre 7 décrit le petit groupe fermé et intimiste appelé coven, unité de base pour la pratique de la magie, ainsi que les ‘women’s mysteries’: les conceptions du genre et les manipulations symboliques dont ce dernier fait l’objet en vue d’une libération à la fois politique, émotionnelle et spirituelle. Une caractéristique cruciale de la sorcellerie Reclaiming est la réflexion constante sur la différence (et l’indifférence) sexuelle. L’identité sexuelle n’est en général pas envisagée comme naturelle, malgré l’accent mis en rituel sur les éléments naturels, mais paradoxale. Le véritable fil rouge de l’ouvrage est bien le paradoxe qui caractérise toute la théologie (chapitre 4) et l’anthropologie du groupe (chapitre 5): par exemple, ce qui est appelé par l’auteur ‘mythe d’origine’, et qui est une subversion de la thèse de Bachofen sur le renversement d’un matriarcat originaire narrant la ‘chute patriarcale’, consiste à la fois en une histoire située dans le passé – mythe d’origine si l’on veut – et en une utopie, récit pour la transformation du présent, créatrice d’espérance (chapitre 2). Le chapitre 3 explore le rapport entre expérience spirituelle et idéologie par un habile portrait idéal-typique de deux sorcières Reclaiming: l’une ayant choisi Reclaiming en accord avec ses convictions politiques et l’autre à la suite d’une expérience intense de la déesse et pour laquelle la politique viendrait en second. Le chapitre 8 décrit la transformation de la sorcière militante sceptique en une sorcière ‘croyante’ comme processus menant à un rituel d’initiation.

Dans l’introduction, Salomonsen formule deux espoirs par rapport à son ouvrage. D’une part, que les parties descriptives suffisent comme fondation empirique pour d’autres analyses. D’autre part, que le lecteur voie les bénéfices de sa démarche interdisciplinaire qui associe l’anthropologie à la théologie pour la compréhension du phénomène étudié. Si on peut admirer la précision et le rendu vivant de l’ethnographie, j’émettrais quelques réserves quant à la deuxième question.

Premièrement les deux disciplines sont insérées dans un discours d’équilibre réciproque. L’interdisciplinarité serait avant tout corrective, chaque discipline corrigeant les ‘biais’ de l’autre. L’anthropologie – qualifiée de réductionniste – fournirait un outillage de base (basic tools) en méthodes qualitatives, un savoir-faire en matière d’altérité, et la théologie permettrait l’analyse et la critique respectueuse de l’objet. En fin de compte, l’anthropologie ne sert que d’appui empirique à une réflexion philosophique. Son interprétation se ressent de cette perspective théologique: on risque d’être irrité par la manière forcée dont l’auteur use de cette perspective théologique: on risque d’être irrité par la manière forcée dont l’auteur use pour ramener Reclaiming dans le giron de la Chrétienté libérale. En lisant les comptes rendus sur des rituels dont les éléments sont empruntés à la Kabbale et au hatha-yoga, par exemple, on aurait souhaité une analyse plus nuancée.

SEVERINE DESPONDS
Université de Lausanne, Switzerland


L’ouvrage nous offre la description et la compréhension du paysage social vietnamien dans la conjoncture née du nouveau cours (le ‘doi moi’) annoncé en 1986. Il entraîne une recomposition profonde des modes de collectivisation et d’appartenances individuelles dans le cours des années 1990, au moment des enquêtes. A travers la présentation de destins individuels, celle des
transformations des entreprises et des quartiers urbains est dessiné avec force et nuances le nouveau cadre social et symbolique produit par cet objet mal identifié qui semble relever de la tératologie: ‘le socialisme de marché’.

L’étude menée dans l’usine d’Itsion (comptant 3,000 salariés et située à 10 km de Hanoï) montre les changements faisant suite à la suppression des rémunérations en nature, et des tickets de rationnement; l’entreprise se retire de la gestion des quartiers qui avaient été construits autour d’elle; une action volontaire est menée pour transformer les salariés en consommateurs avec la création en 1998 d’un club de femmes dans lequel est prononcée l’élegance vestimentaire et sont donnés des cours de maquillage, de cuisine et autres. Plus globalement, la création du marché ressort de l’installation de panneaux publicitaires dans les rues des villes; cependant, ils cohabitent avec des panneaux où sont dessinés les slogans écrits ou iconiques du régime. Cette rencontre est le symbole du ‘socialisme de marché’.

Les conséquences en sont l’augmentation considérable de la circulation monétaire. Manifeste d’une part dans la généralisation de l’achat de l’accès à l’emploi ou l’achat de diplôme et de soins médicaux, ou du moindre papier administratif, les liens de parenté sont utilisés pour accéder à celui auquel on doit acheter son emploi. Par ailleurs la corrélation entre la position dans la hiérarchie de l’État-parti et l’enrichissement qui se construit à travers la participation au marché est évidente; ainsi on constate l’accaparement des terrains continuant à appartenir à l’État par les notables et l’enrichissement qui se construit à travers la participation au marché. Les conséquences en sont l’augmentation considérable de la circulation monétaire. Manifeste d’une part dans la généralisation de l’achat de l’accès à l’emploi ou l’achat de diplôme et de soins médicaux, ou du moindre papier administratif, les liens de parenté sont utilisés pour accéder à celui auquel on doit acheter son emploi. Par ailleurs la corrélation entre la position dans la hiérarchie de l’État-parti et l’enrichissement qui se construit à travers la participation au marché est évidente; ainsi on constate l’accaparement des terrains continuant à appartenir à l’État par les notables et l’enrichissement qui se construit à travers la participation au marché. Les conséquences en sont l’augmentation considérable de la circulation monétaire. Manifeste d’une part dans la généralisation de l’achat de l’accès à l’emploi ou l’achat de diplôme et de soins médicaux, ou du moindre papier administratif, les liens de parenté sont utilisés pour accéder à celui auquel on doit acheter son emploi. Par ailleurs la corrélation entre la position dans la hiérarchie de l’État-parti et l’enrichissement qui se construit à travers la participation au marché est évidente; ainsi on constate l’accaparement des terrains continuant à appartenir à l’État par les notables et l’enrichissement qui se construit à travers la participation au marché.

L’ouvrage nous fait assister à l’émergence d’une minorité de riches qui manifestent leur position à travers l’ostentation de leur demeure (par exemple la petite rue dans le quartier d’Istion ou le deuxième quartier étudié). Cette minorité, à travers ses pratiques ostentatoires, s’éritre en référence pour l’ensemble, ce qui, semble-t-il, est de plus en plus accepté. Dans le deuxième volume Monique Selim décrit le développement du culte des divinités et des génies, sa visibilité terrestre actuelle suit une période pendant laquelle il était interdit et nous dit-on réduit à la clandestinité; l’auteur souligne l’extrême brutalité de la relation de domination qui s’instaure dans le déroulement du culte, et elle en relate une expérience personnelle impressionnante. Conjointement elle analyse la création par les instances officielles et le fonctionnement d’un centre de recherche des tombes des soldats morts pendant les guerres à travers la pratique de médiums transformés en fonctionnaires et elle démonte l’extraordinaire décoration scientifique de l’opération destinée à esquiver son implication dans la catégorie des superstitions.

Le nouveau cours est visiblement l’échec du projet totalitaire de construire, une fois la paix revenue en 1975, une société nouvelle dans laquelle les différenciations sociales auraient eu pour matrice la soumission à l’État-parti. La mise en oeuvre de ce projet était conditionnée par le refoulement – marginalisation, puis destruction – du mode de communication structuré par des relations personnelles autorégulées, avec les liens familiaux et leur dépassement dans le culte des divinités et des génies.

L’ouverture sur le marché capitaliste introduit potentiellement un mode d’individualisation et de collectivisation qui est construit en dehors de la relation et de la soumission à l’État. A terme il ne peut que l’investir, ce qui amènera la dissolution du système despotique; pour répondre à ce danger le pouvoir très classiquement se lance dans des opérations périodiques de purification interne dans le parti et dans l’administration, mais c’est évidemment insuffisant.

D’un autre côté, le marché et les mécanismes internes de recomposition du social contiennent dans le futur la dissolution progressive des relations personnelles autorégulées. Pour maintenir son contrôle sur les effets prévisibles du marché – alors qu’il a abandonné son ambition totalitaire – l’État-parti permet le développement du culte des divinités et des génies et facilite ainsi, en une sorte de retournement stratégique, le renforcement des liens familiaux dans la mesure où le culte des divinités et des génies est le produit du dépassement conservateur des liens familiaux; conjointement, en créant le centre de recherche des morts, il renforce directement les liens familiaux construits autour des morts et du culte qui les entoure.

Le maintien du contrôle étatique sur ces pratiques qui visent à enfermer le marché dans une altérité est symbolisé par la sanctification du personnage d’Ho Chi Minh; il fait partie du monde des divinités et des génies, son buste est placé sur l’autel. Il est la seule divinité présente dans le centre de recherche des morts. Le buste du président défunt, sa photographie, sont la figuration de la présence de l’état, il est la transfiguration de l’état dans le registre du religieux.
D’autre part, ces pratiques sont la mise en scène rituelle de la soumission: ainsi s’offre à l’observateur la brutalité extrême des mediums et celle des administratifs du centre de recherche des morts. Peut-être l’individualisation mise en scène est celle qui se construit dans la soumission par le culte des divinités et des génies; dans le centre de recherche des morts la famille est ainsi prise en tant que telle dans la soumission bureaucratique.

Pour conclure il faut revenir sur le ‘socialisme de marché’ et son énigme: il représente l’effort d’un pouvoir politique – institutionnalisé dans l’état-parti – qui a été construit comme le lieu exclusif de la production du social, donc comme centre du paysage social, alors que le capitalisme tend de par sa nature même à devenir à travers son développement la matrice dominante de la production du social et de la société à subordonner le pouvoir politique à l’ordre qu’il engendre.

GERARD ALTHABE
EHESS, Paris, France


The main part of this book consists of six chapters, five of which were published earlier between 1989 and 2002, and only one of which has been substantially revised and expanded. After the introductory chapter the collection starts with a consideration of colonial categories, in particular the way in which the European community in the plantation belt of Deli, East Sumatra, constituted itself and tried to maintain an image that would legitimate its privileged position. The role of white women turns out to be of special interest in this respect. During the last decades of the nineteenth century European supervisors had to be unmarried. It was considered that it would be too expensive to care for European wives and children in a proper manner. Rather than raising their wages, concubinage with Asian women was condoned and even encouraged. During the first decades of the twentieth century the restriction was relaxed and during the economic boom of the 1920s legal marriage to European wives became the norm. This change went together with a closer identification of the supervisors with the aims of the management, and with the European community as a whole against nationalism and communism.

The next chapter treats the regulation of sexual relations in colonial settings in a much broader historical and comparative framework. It also considers the problematic status of children of mixed European and native descent and the safeguarding of the European cultural identity and supposed psychological characteristics of children in environments dominated by native servants. These two issues are taken up separately in the two chapters that follow. The author points out that in colonial situations race was never a matter of biology alone. What also counted was linguistic proficiency, way of life and a sentiment of belonging to one category rather than the other. In this way an ideology stressing inclusion on the basis of universal values could be combined with discriminatory practices leading to exclusion. It also explains why the education of children, including the inculcation of fitting sentiments, was considered crucial.

These substantive chapters presenting a wealth of empirical details and backed up by an impressive number of footnotes are followed by reflections on the relevance of Foucault’s history of sexuality for colonial situations. In this chapter the author also considers the reception of her book on the same topic. She would like to follow Foucault as someone who encouraged ‘the writing of histories that nourish reversals, recuperations and insurrections within them’. This is demonstrated in the final chapter in which she reports on research on the memories of former domestic servants employed by Dutch families in the colonial period. Whereas Dutch sources stress the sentimental bonds, especially between Dutch children and Indonesian nursery maids, the interviews did not confirm this view. For the servants these were just jobs to earn some money. Why then does the picture reproduced on the front cover suggest such a tie, which is confirmed by independent documentary evidence? Perhaps the explanation is that this picture dates from 1898, and the interviews refer to a much later period.

Although the command of a great variety of sources is truly impressive, an even greater familiarity with documentary evidence and the original contexts in which they were produced might well lead to a very different assessment of the evidence. To take one example with which I happen to be familiar, how representative are the opinions of Kohlbrugge, a ‘prominent doctor’ who worked
on Java around the turn of the century? We do know that they were not taken seriously by the famous Snouck-Hurgronje who worked in the same period in the Indies as special advisor on native affairs. Later in his career, when Kohlbrugge had become professor of ethnology at Utrecht University, his work was either ignored or criticised severely by his colleagues.

Finally, it struck me as an omission that although the colonial categories central to the argument of this book affected ‘the sexual, conjugal and domestic life of both European colonials and their subjects’, we learn next to nothing about changes among Indonesians, and especially the western educated elite. Women in particular seem to have wanted to change their position and were encouraged to do so by Dutch colonials, at least to some extent. Surely, the case of Kartini, whose correspondence with a high ranking Dutch colonial civil servant aroused so much interest and sympathy when it was published in 1911 after her untimely death, indicates the importance of this issue, both for Dutch colonials and their Indonesian subjects.

JAN J. DE WOLF
Utrecht University, The Netherlands


The articles in this book address themes raised by the 1994 international conference on population and development convened in Cairo. Here it was recognised that, contrary to earlier assumptions, modernity, women’s education and greater economic independence would not guarantee a decline in world population. A Malthusian panic changed to a greater focus on health and rights. Tremayne provides an excellent overview.

This volume should be valuable in medical anthropology, gender and demography studies. It demonstrates the value of anthropology in exploring the varied cultural and economic contexts for reproductive decisions and sexual power relations. Old culture-free universalisms cannot be replaced by new ones, as is demonstrated by these detailed ethnographic studies from India, Bolivia, Thailand, Britain, Burkina Faso, Amazonian Peru, Nigeria and Hong Kong. There are also perceptive discussions of youth stereotypes and the circumstances of refugees.

Many of the details provide harrowing reading: the child prostitutes in Thailand, the powerlessness of relatively infertile women in Jaipur and their attempts to assert agency. Ironically, the most inspiring example is provided by the Amazonian Indians in Peru (Belaunde). In an almost functionally coherent system we learn that there is relative equality and mutual respect between spouses and spacing of offspring. To a modernist demographer the couvade and menstrual rituals would seem like so many taboos to be eradicated. Indeed missionisation attempted such, with counter-productive consequences.

Infertile women in south-western Nigeria (Cornwall), if they have economic wealth, can successfully foster the offspring of others, crafting relationships of intimacy through maternal practices where motherhood provides crucial status. Thus some women can subvert or renegotiate the dominant system. But infertile and economically poor women remain marginalised. Again, contrary to modernist assumptions, a wide ranging qualitative and quantitative study of Fulani male migration in Burkina Faso reveals that a decline in fertility is not a result of changes in any alleged autonomy of women, but unwanted, increasing sterility (Hampshire).

In the book’s themes and impetus the influence of feminism is apparent. This can include the problematising of masculinity within sexuality. The notion of fatherhood, whether merely biological or socially elaborated, is sometimes addressed. Russell’s study of teenage pregnancy in Teeside, north-east England introduces male teenagers’ views which do not fit with a rational policy agenda. Unprotected sex includes the thrill of risk in a society where the ideal exciting man is reckless. Young women are reluctant to carry condoms for different reasons; namely that they risk being labelled a ‘slag’. There are also moral restrictions on birth control for the young unmarried. Some boys, learning from their teacher that condoms were free at a family planning clinic, went to the place with new confidence, only to be chased away by a workman. A subsequent volume in this welcome series might pursue further the detailed implications of masculinity in sexual relations where so often men hold ultimate power. The ESRC-funded research by Tony Simpson on masculinity and HIV in Zambia is a pioneering case.

Foucault’s notion of discourse as the critique of dominant knowledges and the investigations of those forms that are considered marginal (Hawkins and Price) is well explored in instances from around
the world. Unexpected contexts reveal that women may seek indigenous healers and find allies among affines (Unnithan-Kumar). Detailed fieldwork among London sex workers who are publicly stereotyped as barren prostitutes, reveals that they are at the same time intent on proving their worth as fertile, even if pregnancy may not be followed through to its full term (Day). Child prostitutes in Thailand see motherhood as an escape and movement from child to adult (Montgomery).

The articles emerged from an Oxford workshop and the book is published in Oxford. I kept having to pinch myself when reading the texts. What a contrast with the ‘swinging sixties’ when four of us Oxford women undergraduates (Hindu, Catholic, Jewish and Anglican) wrote a letter to the Oxford student magazine Isis to contest an article by a Cambridge male lecturer. In denouncing D. H. Lawrence’s ‘vulgar’ gamekeeper in Lady Chatterley’s Lover, the ‘eminent’ English literature lecturer in a pre-Aids era, had declared that sex was only for reproduction and ‘fructifying the womb’, albeit in a spiritual embrace. We were duly chastised, rather like those boys in Teeside decades later. Our letter induced the authorities to ban all future discussion of sex in student publications. Today, and doubtless before, anthropology, as exemplified in the Oxford facilitators of this volume, is at the forefront of life-changing debates on sex and reproduction.

JUDITH OKELY
University of Hull, UK