

PARKIN, DAVID & STEPHEN HEADLEY (eds). *Islamic prayer across the Indian Ocean: inside and outside the mosque* (Indian Ocean Ser.). xi, 256 pp., bibliogr. Richmond, Sy.: Curzon Press, 2000. £45.00 (cloth)

A few years ago, standing awkwardly at the back of a mosque in Jordan as the congregation bowed towards Mecca, I thought I suddenly glimpsed what it might feel like to be a Muslim, remembering that the Arabic words for 'community' and 'mother' have the same root (*amm*), and the following from Joyce's *Ulysses*: 'The cords of all link back, strand-twinning cable of all flesh'. But I was later told by two scholars separately that there is no warrant for this conceit in the Islamic tradition, God being unambiguously male. So it was gratifying to read in Andrew Beatty's contribution to this collection of papers that, according to some members of a Javanese sect, the Sangkan Paran, 'the *haj* is nothing more than a symbol of human development', the Meccan sanctuary being seen as a kind of womb. It is true that this sect's claim to be truly Muslim is not always accepted by the piously orthodox, being more a contemplation of origins than worship of a transcendent Creator.

The 1990s' academic craze for the plural number produced the notion among some anthropologists, reacting against the official doctrine of a seamless Islamic community, that there were many 'Islams'. A more measured assessment now recognizes the commonalities in different Islamic traditions, and seeks to understand the divergences. This book focuses thematically on prayer (*salāt*), one of the most central of the five 'pillars' of Islam, and its many variants and complements, and geographically on the long-standing transnational interactions which may be historically traced in the Indian Ocean region, from eastern Africa through the Indian Ocean islands to Indonesia. Saudi Arabia is excluded here as being a centre of orthodoxy, and the Indian subcontinent merely for lack of editorial space.

What might have been a dry project is given life by the sophistication of its treatment. For instance, whereas the idea of all proselytizing world religions co-opting local belief systems is familiar, Michael Lambek suggests that, in the island of Mayotte, the presence of Sakalava spirits in performances of poems about the prophet Muhammad (*maulida*) may testify to an incorporation having taken place in the other direction. John Bowen casts doubt on general theories of ritual by showing how in Indonesian public life in the 1990s – as possibly in the witchcraft trials in Salem in 1692 – more important than the propositional content of *al-Fatihah* or the Lord's Prayer, respectively, was the way in which a speaker recited it; for this revealed the state of one's heart. David Parkin distinguishes two ways of seeking to

escape the fatality of divine predetermination. One is to emphasize an ontological oneness with God, as do some Islamic brotherhoods; another, observed by Parkin in his own fieldwork in Zanzibar, is to develop a genre of prayer which is complementary to the prescribed daily *salāt*, i.e. *dā'wa*, a form of request which can shade into offering and even sacrifice to spirits. Allyson Purpura presents a portrait of a Zanzibari spiritual leader whose personal *karāma*, or grace, implicitly threatens the authority of neo-Wahhabite sheikhs who seek to impose a supposed orthodoxy. Stephen C. Headley notes how Javanese Islam is deeply impregnated with cosmological preoccupations similar to those of Hinduism.

Farouk Topan describes Swahili and Ismaili perceptions of *salāt* clearly; but it is odd, given Parkin's use in his introduction of the 'spatial trope' of prayers inside and outside the mosque, that neither author mentions that Ismailis in modern times do not generally have mosques, but multi-purpose meeting-places. And perhaps Headley's habit of explanation by etymology detracts a little from his impressive scholarship. Otherwise, the only charge to be made against this admirable book is that it is too modest, for its important overall message is that the limits of Islam are far more various and ductile than is often realized.

Parkin says that, despite Islam's entrenched hostility to polytheism, the usefulness of animism, pantheism, and polytheism as explanatory systems 'has been incorporated in Islam to an extent less likely in European post-Enlightenment Christianity'. Well yes, but there are *prima facie* analogues with some modern Christianity outside Europe, and with pre-Enlightenment Christianity inside Europe. Parkin seems to have reacted rather strongly, on the evidence of such caution about making comparisons, against the buccaneering spirit of earlier anthropologists.

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SCHNELL, SCOTT. *The rousing drum: ritual practice in a Japanese community*. xii, 363 pp., illus., map, tables, bibliogr. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1999. \$59.00 (cloth), \$33.95 (paper)

Every April, the residents of Furukawa, a provincial town of 7,000 nestled in the mountains of central Japan, hold a three-day festival to entice and entertain the town's tutelary deity with prayers, processions, and performances, and entreat divine benevolence for the coming year.

The tourists who now flock to Furukawa view the festival as a nostalgic reminder of timeless communal spirit and folk religiosity. Scott Schnell, who conducted fieldwork and

archival research in the town in 1989–91 (with several more recent visits), offers a different view of a festival that barely contains countervailing pressures and which has experienced drastic changes in its social organization and cultural form over several centuries.

His lucid study is at once an informative and detailed account of the festival's structure; a history of how its transformations have expressed broader socio-political change in the town and its region; and an effort to address the larger analytical problem of how such a complex ritual can be important, not as a replication of established structure but as 'a strategic quest for influence and control' by its participants.

The 'rousing drum' of his title refers to what has become the festival centre-piece. After darkness on the first evening, a massive drum is hauled through the narrow streets on a structure that carries festival officials and several young drum-beaters. As the drum passes through each of the town's eleven neighbourhoods, its thunderous sound incites the young men of the neighbourhood to attack it with their own smaller drum suspended below a long pole. They must fight through other neighbourhood drum squads and a burly corps guarding the main drum itself in order to attach their drum to the main drum and occasionally jostle and even topple the rousing drum. Waves of such assaults continue throughout the nocturnal parade. This raucous melee is framed by more decorous events, before and after – shrine ceremonies and feasts, processions of the sacred palanquin of the deity itself and of the elaborate festival wagons that are also sponsored by each of the neighbourhoods.

The widespread significance of festivals (*matsuri*) in Japanese life has long attracted scholarly attention but, even within this literature, Schnell's study is distinguished by his careful delineation of the Furukawa organization and procedures and his analysis of the festival's historicity.

Indeed, the rousing drum that so provokes residents and tourists only became prominent in the modern era. Nation-state-making and increasing disparities in wealth in the late nineteenth century were met, not with direct political action but with a reworking of the festival to the rousing drum as an extended moment of mass physical challenge. The ensuing commotion proved an 'irrefutable alibi' for those who nudged the drums to batter the house-fronts of landlords and storefronts of merchants and even the local police station.

The last fifty years have brought further shifts of emphasis and tone, as the festival has been successfully commercialized by local tourist-promoters. The drums continue to rouse the fighting spirits of locals, and injuries are not uncommon among those who pack

into the festival mosh-pit, but the tensions that rise are more often resentment against the spectators and frustrations with fellow residents who push the tourism which relegates their neighbours to roles as heritage entertainers.

Schnell grounds his analysis in Sherry Ortner's 'practice' approach to structural transformation; in Catherine Bell's insistence on strategic ritualization, by which rituals may reproduce an existing order but not always in the terms of those it favours; and in James Scott's notion of a hidden transcript of grievances and practical consciousness that can be glimpsed during certain public festivities. His study reminds us that the sacred is not necessarily the sanctimonious and can often sanction transgressions of secular order. Such acts of transgression may be momentary, but their effects can be lasting.

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BARNARD, ALAN. *History and theory in anthropology*. xii, 243 pp., figs., tables, bibliogr. Cambridge: Univ. Press, 2000. £12.95 (paper)

When introducing the discipline to the uninitiated, anthropologists follow two major strategies. Most prefer to illustrate the uniqueness of the discipline by examining in depth some indicative themes or questions. Others choose to unravel anthropology's accomplishments in terms of a systematic conceptual order reflecting the discipline's history and the development of particular ideas within it. Alan Barnard's new textbook represents a fine example of the second strategy, which I would call 'contextual' because it locates theoretical concepts and approaches within particular intellectual contexts of origin. Newcomers to the discipline often find themselves in desperate need of the 'who is who' and 'what came before what' information which makes theoretical debates interesting to follow and ethnographic particularities charming. Barnard provides valuable information of this kind, allowing the student to develop the foundation that renders meaningful the multitude of voices and cultural manifestations encountered during first exposure to anthropology.

An introductory chapter defines the discipline's conceptual boundaries, the separate fields and theoretical perspectives within it. Barnard underlines the overlapping and fluid nature of different anthropological