

berland-Sund war seit den frühen 1840er Jahren von amerikanischen und schottischen Walfängern besucht worden; bemerkenswert ist immerhin, dass Boas und Weike nicht einmal Zeugen einer Waljagd geworden zu sein scheinen, weder auf Grönlandwale noch auf Narwale.)

Unter dem 14. Oktober lesen wir etwa: "Wie ich aufgewaschen hatte, ging ich vor die Thür, ich wollte in die Tubiks [*tupiq* = Zelt aus Karibufellen] und da hörte ich die Eingeborenen über der amerikanischen Station so schreien, da ging ich hin, wie ich so weit kam, da hatten sie ein Bärenfell an ein Gerüst gehängt und Taue und übten da Schiffsdienst. Sie hatten einen Capitän und Steuermann und was sonst auf Schiffen ist, ich wurde Kuper [*cooper* = Küfer]. Es waren keine Kinder, die da spielten, sondern da waren welche zwischen, die schon in die 20 Jahre waren. Sie gingen nachher noch auf einen Walfischfang. Ein Großer und ein Kleiner, die stellten den Walfisch vor, die Anderen faßten sich an ihre Koltans [*qullitaaq* = Oberpelz] und stellten die Boote vor und teilten sich in drei Teile und gingen auf den Walfisch los, dann machten sie, als wenn sie harpunierten, wenn er tot war, dann wurde er ans Schiff gebracht, aber das wurde eine Arbeit, der Fisch lebte noch und schlug so viel, daß sie die Koltan los ließen, aber dann war eine Schreierei und dann mußte sich der Fisch wieder hinten an den Letzten anfassen und dann ging es mit Geschrei wieder weiter. Wenn sie auf den Platz gekommen waren, welcher das Schiff vorstellte, da kriegten sie einen Schnaps, der Capitän nahm einen dicken Stein als Flasche und einen kleinen als Glas und schenkte dann ein, kleine Steine kriegten sie als Tabak. Wie das vorbei war, wurde eine Bärenjagd gemacht, die Kleinen wurden Hunde und zwei Große Bären und die anderen Jäger und dann wurde gelaufen und gerannt solange, bis sie die Bären hatten. Zuletzt fingen sie in den Tubiks an zu a[n]kuten [*angakkuq* = Schamane; von Boas und Weike zu ankuten = schamanisieren verbalisiert], da hörten sie auf. Solches Vergnügen machen sich die jüngeren Leute hier zu Lande" (78 f.). Viel anschaulicher hätte Franz Boas dergleichen wohl kaum beschrieben.

Christoph Egger

Murrell, Nathaniel Samuel: Afro-Caribbean Religions. An Introduction to Their Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Traditions. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010. 431 pp. ISBN 978-1-4399-0041-3. Price: \$ 39.95

The African-based religions of the New World have been much studied, for over a century now, but no single scholar has attempted a work as comprehensive as this. The word "monumental" will probably be used to describe it. The book jacket says the work covers "every African-derived religion of the Caribbean;" and it looks as well into the broad African roots of, and specific cultural influences upon many of them, and he cites all relevant scholarship.

Nathaniel Samuel Murrell is known in the field, as a co-editor of the well-reviewed collection of writings on Rastafari, "Chanting Down Babylon" (Philadelphia 1998), and of "Religion, Culture and Tradition in the Caribbean" (New York 2000). This work bears his name

alone. Murrell is Grenadian, educated at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad, and is currently Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religion at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. He says this project occupied him for nine years. He acknowledges that in spite of its title, its geographic scope is somewhat limited. His focus is on African derivation and interrelationships with other African-based systems; thus he includes Brazil but excludes locations like Guyana, Suriname, Guadaloupe, and Martinique and some fringe areas whose histories are intertwined more with Europe or Latin America than with Caribbean neighbors.

But what remains is vast, rich, and complex; how can one present it all? Murrell makes good selections. The work comprises an "Introduction," and 14 numbered chapters in five well-chosen parts: Part I, "African Connections. Historical Roots of Afro-Caribbean Religions," includes chapters on 1) the tremendously influential "Yoruba, Fon-Ewe, Ashanti, and Kongo Cultural History," and 2) "African Cultus and Functionaries." These constitute essential background, and the African cultural traditions are well-selected because they are the most influential. Part II is exclusively on Haitian Vodou, and this is a good idea, because this is surely the most deeply and widely – and dangerously – misunderstood of all Afro-Caribbean traditions, and it has wide historical influence, through the American south and into North American cities as well. Vodou is covered in two chapters: 3) "Vodou and the Haitians' Struggle," and 4) "Serving the Lwa" (the accepted spelling of the Yoruba-derived word for the major spirits of the pantheon). Part III is about Cuban Santeria, another deeply Yoruba-derived system, and its variants, over three chapters, introduced by a general discussion in chapter 5. Chapter 6, "Energy of the Ashe Community and Cultus," focuses on *ashe*, that central and widely important Yoruba version of the personal communicable and expandable power in all living things; and chapter 7 discusses the misunderstood Kongo-based "Palo Monte Mayombe." Part IV takes us south, to Brazil, tremendously important because of its huge and culturally intact Yoruba populations, and Trinidad, in three chapters. Chapter 8 is about the important, highly social Candomble "with some of the strongest African traditions in the Americas" (with *axe*, Portuguese version of *ashe*, again in focus). Chapter 9 discusses the multiethnic and hugely popular Umbanda and many lesser-known and mysterious local variants, including Macumba, "one of the earliest but most suppressed and least respected religion in the ... African diaspora," widely regarded as evil even today. Chapter 10 focuses on *Orisha*, the Yoruba generic word for a deity; this and Shango, the powerful Yoruba deity of thunder and lightning, are both full-fledged syncretistic religious systems in Trinidad and Tobago. The final Part V surveys Jamaica, home of several distinct traditions already familiar to Murrell, in four chapters, beginning with chapter 11), Obeah, a poorly-understood and greatly feared magico-spiritual system widespread in the eastern Caribbean and in many North American cities as well. Chapters 12 and 13 cover the lesser-known but fascinating systems of Myal and Kumina, Poco, Zion, and Convince.

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And chapter 14 discusses the well-known Rastafari. The “Conclusion” to the book is a mere two pages, a brief afterthought. There follow 56 pages of “Notes” to all the numbered chapters – required reading, not only for the incredibly numerous bibliographic citations and annotations to many of them, but for much substantive material. Murrell uses this section for a lot of his rationale and interpretation and criticism of earlier ideas. There is a much needed “Glossary” of ten pages. The “Selected Bibliography” is organized by the “Parts” of the book (a problem; see below); an essential and fairly complete “Index” ends the work.

It is a vast and mostly successful undertaking, truly a monumental work, and it must be on the shelf of anyone interested in cultures of the Caribbean, from any disciplinary perspective. But, in such a vast project there are bound to be problems; and a thorough review must acknowledge them. First, it seems to me that Professor Murrell does not fully realize the breadth of his own accomplishment, the fruits of his nine laborious years, that it can and should stand alone, *sui generis*. He overjustifies its *raison d’être*. In several places he claims that recognition of African influences and the uniqueness of Caribbean systems have been slow to develop in academia. He begins on p. 1 with reference to “academic skeptics who have questioned the ability to prove for certain that African religions survived oppressive conditions of colonialism ...” There may have been such “academic skeptics,” but they were few and of little influence. He alleges that a “persistent white view had been that Africa had little particular culture to begin with, and that the slaves had lost touch with that as well.” Yes, this was the pervading, old, racist colonial view, found among a very few conservative historians as well; but it certainly has *not* characterized academia. And he refers to “the provocative Frazier-Herskovits debate, *which has raged since the early 1940s*, about how much of African religion and culture survived ...” [my italics]. This is E. Franklin Frazier, pioneering black sociologist, who did indeed differ with (white) anthropologist Melville Herskovits on the nature of cultural influences on American black institutions; but the “debate” was an understandable product of the sociology and race relations of the time, and it was pretty quiet, and short-lived. And there are many, too many more references to racist, biased, narrow views which have long denied the validity of what Murrell is trying to do. Author Murrell was born, bred, and educated in the Caribbean, and these may well represent lingering pervasive attitudes which bombarded and moulded him, and that is indeed unfortunate; let me assure him, and the reader, that they are *not* widely shared among serious American and European Afro-Caribbean Studies of the past half-century!

As an anthropologist, I’d like to see more specifics of African cultural influences in the Caribbean. Art is important, but virtually ignored here; the *veve* and many other visual representations of Haitian Vodou, for example contain many African symbolic elements. Murrell enlisted a talented artist for the work, who produced mostly unexplained decorative drawings. Murrell focuses on sensational aspects of the Haitian zombie (which is not

“a flesh-eating vampire,” p. 82), but the belief is of important ethnological significance, and the word shows direct trans-Atlantic connection, from Kongo *nzombi*, the root for *jumbie* or *jumbee* elsewhere; “legend” and “myth” are used interchangeably; “magic,” sorcery,” and “witchcraft, absolutely central to African and Caribbean belief systems,” are carelessly discussed.

Murrell acknowledges the help of several persons, including one who “read, edited, and corrected all sixteen chapters in a mere four days.” For this task he and his publishers ought to have employed a stable of experts who ought to have taken some weeks. The book is, very sadly, replete with errors, omissions, and incomplete and inadequate definitions. Some errors are simply careless (“Bahians transformed the Orisha Ogun [sic; Oshun is meant], the ‘Yoruba orixa of the river,’ into the goddess of the sea,” p. 9); some statements are flat wrong (“Women almost always provide the music and dance at African ceremonies”, p. 44.) There is no bibliography for the “Introduction”; one has to search through the other sections. Some bibliographic references are wrong; a great many of the “Glossary” entries are too vague to be helpful; some central terms (e.g., Lucumi, the Yoruba in Cuba) are not glossed nor included in the “Index.” Some important scholars are misidentified; art historian Marla Berns (p. 29) and geographer Robert Voeks (161) are identified as anthropologists. There are too many such errors and weaknesses, and they do detract from Murrell’s huge accomplishment; we can hope that a second edition will fix things and this book will be regarded as *the* definitive compendium on Afro-Caribbean religions.

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Nadjmabadi, Shahnaz R. (ed.): *Conceptualizing Iranian Anthropology. Past and Present Perspectives*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2009. 278 pp. ISBN 978-1-84545-626-9. Price: £ 53.00

In 2004 the editor, an Iranian-born anthropologist at the University of Tübingen, Germany, convened a meeting for several Iranian and Western anthropologists in Frankfurt, the first and only one of its kind since the Revolution of 1979. For this reason alone the resulting compilation of four articles by scholars from Iran, three by Iranians from diaspora, and six by Western scholars, is of great value, the more so as the articles cover salient aspects of anthropological research in Iran and, in doing so, implicitly illustrate the gap between Iranian and Western academics’ methodological, theoretical, and practical concerns. This gap had motivated the editor to arrange the meeting with the goal of finding ways and means of future cooperation through an exchange of positions and ideas, and to envision that such cooperation would improve the academic standing of Iranian anthropology. The most recent political developments in Iran, with their threat of further curtailment of most social sciences, turned this goal into a slim hope for the present. The articles explicitly and – by unevenness in scope, candidness, style, and scholarly depth – implicitly, illustrate the difficult status of anthropological research in and on Iran.