

example, a touring orchestra. In fact, it is hard to see any parallels between the truly itinerant lifestyle of the *namsadang* (clearly detailed in chap. 1) and the lifestyles lived by musicians today and, accordingly, I would suggest that the subtitle “The Rebirth of Itinerant Performance Culture” is misleading, as are some other formulations – for example, “itinerant troupe performance culture as lived and experienced today” (15). Elsewhere, it is suggested that the *namsadang* were “early ‘fusion’ artists” (18) and that SamulNori’s international collaborations constitute a natural extension of this; however, no evidence is provided to show that the *namsadang* groups created musical hybrids out of forms encountered during their travels or, more importantly, that they played together with other local groups in distant host communities (which is what “fusion” has meant in the case of SamulNori). Lastly, although some readers may be persuaded by Hesselink’s argument that SamulNori’s seated and staged performance constitutes a natural progression from the *namsadang*’s increasingly presentational performance style, many may regard other aspects of SamulNori performance practice as constituting dramatic departures away from the *namsadang* ethos; in particular, chap. 1 clearly shows that a defining feature of the *namsadang*’s art was its multifaceted, syncretic nature – fusing dance, drama, acrobatics, percussion music, and more – and this performance feature was notably removed from SamulNori’s own performance practice in the 1970s. Meanwhile, it is important to note that there are actually a number of contemporary performance groups who superficially appear far more *namsadang*-like than the original SamulNori group (or even than the current troupe known as “*namsadang*”), although they too are not in any sense itinerant. One such group is the Ulsan Minsok Yesulwŏn (Ulsan Folk Art Group), with whom the present reviewer worked in the late 1990s; they have long championed syncretic performance, professionalism, and versatility in multiple styles (including *p’ungmul*, shaman music, *samul nori* pieces, and more recent creations), while living and working communally as a large and extremely close-knit collective. Any book exploring the *namsadang*’s legacy should surely briefly outline the activities of groups such as this, if only in passing.

In sum, Hesselink’s beautifully crafted, incisive, informative, and passionately enthusiastic book sheds much light on SamulNori’s extraordinary achievements, comprehensively and (generally) persuasively articulating the various arguments disseminated by SamulNori itself (and its many devoted followers) regarding the group’s place in Korean music history. The book will undoubtedly stimulate further involvement in the genre amongst both academics and musicians, while greatly promoting perceptions of the repertoire as being a natural progression from *namsadang* activities – providing the form with stronger roots into the past and stressing a lineage that is clearly differentiated from *p’ungmul* lineages, and thereby enhancing its pedigree. In so doing, the author has done a great service to the SamulNori world – Hanullim Inc., the various groups that specialise in the music, and the legions of fans. It is hoped that the author will build upon this study with a sequel examining current perspectives re-

garding the repertoire (which is, of course, no longer new and has acquired a canonic status). Undoubtedly, there is no other academic better suited to this endeavour.

Simon Mills

Hoffstaedter, Gerhard: *Modern Muslim Identities. Negotiating Religion and Ethnicity in Malaysia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2011. 272 pp. ISBN 978-87-7694-081-2. (NIAS Monographs, 119) Price: £ 18.99

Studies of the modern politics and society of Malaysia, a federation which gained independence from the British in 1957 and expanded in 1963 to incorporate Singapore – which left in 1965, Sarawak and Sabah – both in Borneo island, have been fraught with issues of identity. With its convoluted societal make-up, Malaysia has for years been a godsend fieldwork site for social scientists’ and ethnographers’ intent on unravelling the intricate multi-layered relationships tying together the themes of ethnicity, religion, politics, and civil society. The names of such scholars as Judith Nagata, A. B. Shamsul, Michael Peletz and Joel Kahn come to mind in this broad area of Malaysian identity studies.

Having acknowledged the competitive terrain engulfing such a discourse, Gerhard Hoffstaedter’s “Modern Muslim Identities” – the outcome of a three and a half-year study generously funded by La Trobe University, Australia, has to be commended for uninhibitedly bringing out perceptions, observations, and conclusions which would be deemed controversial in Malaysia, and of which researchers reliant on local sources of funds would have consciously eluded. Stakeholders in both Malaysia’s state and civil society, in their perennial competition with each other, often provide logistical support for studies that can potentially vindicate their heavily slanted visions of a functioning national polity. “Modern Muslim Identities,” however, chides both sides, whose influence in society is permeated through patronage-based networks which serve to perpetuate rather than debunk prejudicial interpretations of Malaysian identity constructions. As Hoffstaedter argues, globalisation notwithstanding, “the nation-state remains a pivotal identity marker” (4), and in Malaysia, the state-controlled media greatly facilitates its stakeholder’s constantly shifting sociocultural national projects, from Mahathir Mohamad’s Vision 2020 and the New Malay, to Abdullah Ahmad Badawi’s Islam Hadhari, and to Najib Razak’s One Malaysia. As for civil society, Hoffstaedter ably shows how its progressive strand has been steadily submerged by reactionary actors who have willingly “been used by and have utilised the state to further their own agendas” and “are better organised and thus speak with louder voices” (117). So, despite what is seen by many as the encouraging unleashing of civil society forces in the wake of the *reformasi* euphoria of the late 1990s, scepticism abounds in Malaysia, where, at least as far Malay-Muslim politics is concerned, growth of a vibrant civil society might not be in tandem with an enhancement of democracy within an ethnically integrative framework. On the contrary, such civil society elements, which are invariably better organised than pro-

gressive civil Islam exponents, have, in their quest for further Islamisation of society, lamentably helped to reify the politically expedient usage of Islam as an exclusionary identifier of Malayness. Furthermore, in the eyes of the Malay-Muslim masses, the legitimacy of liberal components of Islamic civil society is greatly eroded by their dependence on Western aid to organise their programmes.

Early on, Hoffstaedter professes to interrogate “how Malaysians negotiate a multitude of ethnic, cultural, religious and political identities” (9). While such an endeavour might have sounded straightforward, I doubt whether he would have derived much in terms of finding out “what the Malaysian case may have to say in more general terms about living together in multicultural societies” (9). In any case, a lot of what Hoffstaedter has to say do not depart from the tendency to establish the Malaysian cases of multicultural experimentation and multireligious ordering of society as *sui generis* in the study of multiethnic nation-states in general and Muslim communities in particular. Only in Malaysia is the identity of a particular ethnic stock inextricably intertwined with the Islamic background of its members. Yet, the seemingly coterminous relationship is not mutually congruent; as Hoffstaedter demonstrates in the case of one of his main informants, Indian Muslims still get entangled in the dilemma of the desirability and ways and means of qualifying as indigenous Malays. By refusing what would seem to be a privilege, for example, by seeking to maintain Indian culture and Indian languages in their quotidian lifestyle, they lose out by being subjected to a slew of *sharia* laws while having to forego affirmative action benefits accorded to Malay-Muslims. What transpires in Malaysia is the sacrifice of the rich universalising traditions of Islam and Malayness for the benefit of a select few of the Malay-Muslim ruling elite. In treating their ethno-religious identities as “essentialised and absolute,” going against the grain of Malaysian history as a cosmopolitan nation occupied by peoples of “fluid identities” (225), the Muslim masses of Malaysia have been held at the mercy of the Malay-Muslim ruling classes, against whom Hoffstaedter’s verdict is certainly damning. The elite, he insists, thrives on a manipulative employment of the “Malay special position” constitutional provisions to further selfish ends, “whilst maintaining a (colonial) divide and rule mentality between ethnic factions” (226). They have engaged, for example, in a debilitating “politicide” of the Malay-Muslims, by which he means the multilevel weakening of their political independence and outlook via a graduated series of paternalistic policies, ingeniously disguised as schemes to defend Malay and Islamic sovereignty, but which ultimately cow them into submission to their leaders. Such deference is considered a worthy price to pay in avoidance of a much-hyped non-Muslim political domination. Such a “culture of fear,” appealing to the Malay-Muslim primordial ethnoreligious sentiments, intensifies whenever a general election approaches. Malay-Muslim leaders unashamedly harp on such ethnically exclusive themes to shore up grassroots support, to which I would add that this has come about with the connivance of non-Malay partners of the ruling Barisan Nasional governing

coalition – a point missed out by Hoffstaedter but without devaluing his study, which dwells on the sole question of Muslim identities.

Hoffstaedter’s most severe indictment of the Malaysian state’s management of Islam focuses on its hypocritical character. From evidence he has gathered, Hoffstaedter believes there is a yawning gap between theory and practice in Malaysia’s top-down efforts at creating an Islamic polity, the latest manifestation of which is former Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi’s “Islam Hadhari” – a multi-cultural “blank banner” supposedly designed to overcome the ethnocentrism of past state-sponsored Islamisation agenda. Unfortunately, albeit rather unsurprisingly, disconnect with the grassroots had doomed the highly ambitious project of sociopolitical transformation purportedly run along Islamic lines to failure. Islam Hadhari was as unfathomable to non-Muslims as much as it lacked grassroots support from lay Muslims, whose daily encounter with state-orchestrated Islam came in the form of authoritarian moral policing and religious surveillance of competing Islamic discourses. The popular perception of the application of Islamic criminal law in Malaysia as smacking of double standards and unduly favouring the rich and powerful Malay-Muslim elite is adequately given credence by Hoffstaedter. Small wonder then that in an age where information is easily available, dissatisfaction with official Islam not unusually results in paroxysmal advocacy of rival visions of Islamic utopias offered by popular charismatic Malay-Muslim religious leaders, arbitrarily shunned by the state as deviants. One of them, Ashaari Muhammad (1937–2010), left a lasting impression on the map of Malaysian Islam through his Sufi-revivalist movement, Al-Arqam – aptly covered by Hoffstaedter by referring to my doctoral thesis. He misses though the fact that following Al-Arqam’s banning by the Malaysian government in 1994, it had morphed into business entities known as Rifaqat Corporation (1997–2007) and Global Ikhwan (since 2008).

Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid

Jindra, Michael, and Joël Noret (eds.): *Funerals in Africa. Explorations of a Social Phenomenon*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2011. 232 pp. ISBN 978-0-85745-205-4. Price: £ 50.00

Begräbnisse in Afrika sind im Unterschied zu denen der westlichen Welt keine bloße Familienangelegenheit, sondern sie sind ein soziales Ereignis, das die Verwandtschaftsgruppen und die Nachbarschaft einbezieht. Über die Durchführung von Begräbnisritualen definiert sich der Status einer Familie. Daraus versteht sich, dass für die Verstorbenen oft ein viel größerer Aufwand betrieben wird als für noch lebende Personen. Insofern können afrikanische Begräbnisrituale nicht nur von dem Gesichtspunkt betrachtet werden, welche Bedeutung sie für einzelne Personen oder für die Familie haben und in welchen religiösen Kontext sie stehen, sondern sie sind auch gleichzeitig ein gesellschaftliches und wirtschaftliches Thema.

In dem vorliegenden Buch werden acht Beispiele von Begräbnisritualen aus dem subsaharischen Afrika vorgestellt: in Bulawayo (Simbabwe), der Kikuyu und Meru in