

ne Machtstrukturen Bezug nimmt – und gleichzeitig uns Sozialanthropologinnen und Sozialanthropologen zu denken geben sollte.

Dem Autor und seiner gelungenen Publikation sei ein weiterer Bekanntheitsgrad gewünscht. Ein äußerst lesenswertes Buch!  
Gebhard Fartacek

**Lentz, Carola:** *Land, Mobility, and Belonging in West Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013, 331 pp. ISBN 978-0-253-00957-9. Price: \$ 30.00

The landscape of the West African Sahel across northern Ghana and southwestern Burkina Faso is marked by scrub savanna and expanses of fertile red earth that alternate through the year between arid semidesert during the harmattan and flooded fields and gardens during the wet months. Though not far from the Sahara, this territory can be extremely fecund and productive and thus is home to an array of different societies that spread out across the land in similar patterns of migration and settlement. The inhabitants of this region, Lentz asserts in this thoroughly ethnographic historical study, are always on the move. Indeed, rather than adhering solely to previous models of pioneer migration, settlement, village formation and, ultimately, fission to form new settlements, the author turns to the concept of continual mobility to frame the ways in which the different societies of Black Volta region of West Africa move across the landscape.

In the now classic model of the expansion of agnatic kin segments through the interstices of an internal African frontier, migration is spurred by dwindling cultivable land in their home territories and the pressure to find new lands to inhabit and cultivate. However, Lentz believes that this single approach to understanding mobility, wherein pioneers of various groups – the societies that anthropologists have often termed “acephalous” – move out into new areas to establish communities, does not adequately capture the variety of strategies and dispositions towards mobility employed by different ethnic groups. Some groups in the Black Volta region of northern Ghana are, according to Lentz, highly mobile and expansionist while others incline to greater sedentism and entrenchment within their established communities. This is Lentz’s starting point for a fascinating study – one that develops an approach to territoriality, ethnic group mobility, land rights, and settlement that explores the different strategies for movement and expansion.

Based on fieldwork conducted in Ghana and Burkina Faso that uses oral history, ethnographic interviews, and archival research, Lentz argues that narratives of settlement and expansion, of contestations between pioneers and latecomers, and of competition over resources such as land, water, and pasture are frequently articulated in the idiom of ethnic difference and autochthonous identity. Further, Lentz also shows that even in hinterlands, such as the considerably underdeveloped northern regions of Ghana or the southern provinces of Burkina Faso, much importance has been placed by different groups on their claims of village foundation and settlement – the land. This is a crucial insight and an important contribution

made by this volume, especially as these yam, cassava, and millet producing Sahelian regions become ever more important in the food economies of West Africa. Classical approaches to conceptualizing property rights and land tenure in Africa have been focused upon either a precolonial formulation which saw Africans as eminently unrooted and people-centric or upon an ideal of communal tenure that viewed land as inalienable, held in trust by chiefs and earth priests. This ethnography convincingly argues that such overly simplified perspectives are not useful in explaining the processes of movement and proliferation of communities found in West Africa and studied by Lentz for over twenty years. Rather, the forms of mobility found amongst ethnic groups in the Black Volta region must be understood, the author suggests, as oriented towards extending the claim and, indeed, ownership over increasingly valuable and scarce land by one’s own lineage and, by extension, one’s ethnic group.

After developing her approach to mobility across the land in which different ethnic groups exist in a state of continual mobility, competing with other, similar groups or with larger chiefdoms for land, Lentz proceeds to lay out the process through which migrant groups come to stake a claim to a particular piece of land. Here she synthesizes much of her past work and contributes new ideas on the role of earth shrines as symbolic wellsprings of social order and a reminder to all present of the claim that a particular lineage makes to a place on the land. Lentz, like others, emphasizes the role that earth shrines play as foci of religious and kin-based ritual activity. The shrine becomes the place from which an ethnic group’s autochthonous claims to being “of the land” originate and as such comes to serve as a medium through which members of a community venerate their pioneering ancestors and reassert the legitimacy of a lineage to occupy a particular piece of land. However, most anthropologists, who have considered the role of earth shrines in West African societies, have dwelt, for the most part, on their religious, ethnic and identarian dimensions. Lentz takes these explorations one step further by examining not only the political and territorial aspects of these ritual objects but also the ways in which shrines are central to definitions of property rights and economic opportunities that emanate from occupying and laying claim to land. Moreover, Lentz demonstrates in a number of ethnographically and historically detailed case studies from Dagara and Sisala that, rather than being static, primordial manifestations of a group’s territorial claims, shrines can be mobile, instrumental, and readily readjusted to the exigencies of movement across the land. That is, shrines can be abandoned, reestablished, moved, redefined, or revitalized. Here, Lentz is engaging the materiality of shrines in a theoretically innovative manner – one that treats the shrine not just as simple polyvalent ritual symbols but also as incredibly potent and flexible vehicles for asserting land claims, for negotiating access, and transferring ownership, and for navigating the politics of property rights in ethnically heterogeneous terrain.

Lentz goes on to show that the ongoing movement of groups and the contestation over earth shrine territories

and narratives of pioneering village formation has moved into the domain of property rights within the context of Africa nations states seeking to balance national political-legal authority with that of pluralistic approaches to traditional leadership and chieftaincy. Here again, Lentz is contributing significantly to the growing literature on territoriality. The author treats the territory marked out by a lineage's land claims and connection with the earth shrine as part of the process that transforms space, as abstract category couched in the idiom of ethnicity, into a meaningful economic and legal quotidian reality. This process is, of course, frequently bloody and fraught with conflict and Lentz details many of the so-called ethnic disputes of northern Ghana within an ethnographic frame that evokes both autochthonous conceptions of "belonging" to a place and very clear ideas that different ethnic groups and communities have about who owns the land.

Lentz's work is Africanist ethnography and history at its finest and is a masterfully compiled piece of scholarship on issues of land rights, property regimes, and ethnicity in Africa. In wonderful ethnographic detail, the author presents a stimulating and historically rich treatment of ethnic group mobility and the ways in which different societies legitimate their land claims. This volume should be considered essential reading to all scholars working on the interface between land and identity in Africa.

Allan C. Dawson

**Lockyer, Joshua, and James R. Veteto** (eds.): *Environmental Anthropology Engaging Ecotopia. Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillages*. New York: Berg-hahn Books, 2013. 329 pp. ISBN 978-0-85745-879-7. (Environmental Anthropology and Ethnobiology, 17) Price: \$ 110.00

Did you ever wonder what ecovillages and similar "intentional" communities are really all about? The edited volume by the anthropologists Joshua Lockyer and James R. Veteto focuses on three currents of experimentation and counter(agri)culture emerging since the 1960s; Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillages. While the introduction argues, that "we do not know exactly what a sustainable society looks like" (1), the book is fundamentally about particular social experiments with well-defined sustainability agendas and practices. After waves of anthropologists addressing mobility, speed and global connection, the volume offers a welcome portrayal of countermovements oriented towards slowing down and going "local" in a critique of global capitalism. The book boldly aims to be "solutions-focused," and seeks to strengthen anthropological engagement with such experiments and alternatives. Does it succeed? How does it engage with "ecotopia"?

Divided into three sections, the 16 chapters are authored by a stimulating mix of activists and scholars combining new and old scholarship, activist texts and ethnographic description. The volume admirably displays the intermeshed theories and principles of these movements including their anthropological affinities. Bioregionalists thus question the arbitrariness of political bounda-

ries working instead through eco-regions and watersheds. Permaculture stresses "earth care, people care, and fair share" with a set of methods to design agricultural practices that mimic natural patterns. Eco-villages are "intentional communities," settlements designed to do no ecological harm, while continuing into the indefinite future. While a well-meant contribution, do such experiments really need further theory and anthropology? The editors propose several relevant frameworks from ethnoecology to political ecology. Yet, in some respects, the editors are rather suggestive and programmatic in this respect reflecting the novelty of the subject matter. As they note: "... we seek to help construct an anthropology that can productively contribute to an understanding not only of how the world is and how it got that way, but also of how the world could be and how we can get there" (104).

Several chapters offer interesting ethnographic descriptions of specific movements, experiments, and activities. While examples are predominantly North American, cases from Europe and South America illustrate how ecotopia means different things in different places. Most authors are generally both sympathetic to the movements. This raises the question of problematising ecotopia and the underlying aspirations. What are the limits, problematic areas, and messy social aspects anthropologists may encounter? The engagement gets particularly interesting in the sections where authors move from celebratory language towards analytical engagement. Dawson, former President of the Global Ecovillage Network, for example, notes how the concerns of ecovillages have become mainstream, yet how the very model is being challenged by escalating landprices and regulations. Jenny Pickerill underlines the difficulties that "Low Impact Development" faces in Britain when taking up permaculture. Guntra A. Aistara shows the dislike of weeds among Latvian farmers despite permaculture prescriptions as well as the challenges provoked by surrounding intensive agriculture.

Finally, the book illustrates how human creativity and ability do not only move towards more sustainable pathways despite obvious contradictions, but equally recast questions in new terms. Whereas some experiments treasure autonomy and isolation, others are firmly networked. Can such experiments be scaled up? Networks, NGO-funding in some countries, and the central role of training point in that direction. Still, the editors remain cautious, even when arguing against mobilizing mainstream agricultural research on such themes. Their concern is the risk of top-down mainstream agendas undermining grassroots efforts (110). Yet, need we stop there? Are there not ways of bringing these social and environmental experiments in closer dialogue with the rest? This book offers a thought-provoking and excellent set of case studies, which starts to answer the question.

Peter Bille Larsen

**Luehrmann, Sonja:** *Secularism Soviet Style. Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011. 275 pp. ISBN 978-0-253-22355-5. Price: \$ 27.95

Since the McCarthy era, if not earlier, Sovietologists