

parallel zu dem Buch den von Axel Michaels herausgegebenen Band "Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft" (München 1997) und eine allgemeine Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft, wie diejenige von Klaus Hock (1. Aufl. 2002 u. weitere) oder Hans G. Kippenbergs und Kocku von Stuckrads Band (München 2003) zu lesen. Das Buch ist im Stil der WBG Einführungsreihe mit breiten Rändern gesetzt, die Raum für Notizen lassen und einzelnen Abschnitten Schlagwörter zuweisen. Leider ist in der Kopfzeile auf Seite 139 ein Fehler unterlaufen, so dass das Japan Kapitel in der Kopfzeile dem Vereinigten Königreich zugeordnet wird.

Harald Grauer

**Venhorst, Claudia:** Muslims Ritualising Death in the Netherlands. Death Rites in a Small Town Context. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2013. 161 pp. ISBN 978-0-643-90351-8. (Death Studies, 3) Price: € 29.90

Through the use of the key concepts practise, context, and meaning, Claudia Venhorst provides the reader a very well structured and impressively well-organised study on the ritual dynamics of death rites. The main research question focuses on which and how ritual "repertoires" emerge among Muslims. She goes further into analysing what ritual elements are significant to Muslims, which roles can be distinguished, what ritual beliefs are connected to these rites, and what the role of narratives is in the process of constructing ritual meaning to death. With a focus on the ritual cleansing and shrouding of the deceased, the author presents her study within the field of death rites in a context of migration; more specifically in the context of a small town in the Netherlands. Although she focuses on the "lived religion," Islamic scholarly rules and regulations are also briefly included in her discussion on Islamic death rites.

The author emphasises the diversity in the practise of death rites among Muslims in the small town context of Venlo, but seems to overlook the diversity within Islamic rules and regulations and among Islamic scholars with regard to this subject. The diversity, which emerges in this study, is not only a result of a migration setting and small town context, it can also be placed within the larger current scholarly discussions that occur among Islamic scholars. These scholars also emphasise more than once, that Islamic rituals are not "static." Although the author has explained not to focus on Islamic rules and regulations, she could have mentioned these discussions as current and very much of influence in the opinions individual Muslims hold.

On various occasions the author seems to be too brief, resulting in unclear and incorrect information, for example, in chapter 2, where the author sets out to a brief explanation of the ritual purification of the deceased. However brief this may be, it should be correct though. The *awra* is not simply the area from the navel to the knees, this should have been nuanced since the *awra* of a man and woman differ significantly. In its briefness, the author seems also to ignore the religiously based differences among Muslims in the performance of this ritual. Furthermore, the author does refer to a well-known collection of

*fiqh* regulations of Al Azeri (which should be Al Jazeri) but she neglects the many nuances and schools of law Al Jazeri discusses. Since the author does not focus on the Islamic rules and regulations as set out in the *fiqh*, she might only have mentioned the nuances and differences here in a footnote while referring to Al Jazeri. But ignoring to mention it, neglects the diversity among scholars on this topic.

Another example of the author being too brief and thus incorrect is her statement that "as a rule women do not take part in the ritual of the funeral prayer." Again, understanding the author's focus on lived religion, she should have noted here that there is a large and lively discussion among scholars on the presence of women at burial rituals and thus acknowledging a diversity of opinions without discussing them thoroughly. Choosing to overlook this reality in this study is a loss. Without dealing with these discussions exhaustively, the author would have added much more diversity on a different level to this impressive study.

The reader of this book is taken by the hand through a study on the dynamics of death rites among Muslims. The data shows interesting results and the respondents are of various backgrounds. This study, however, only focuses on the ritual of the purification and shrouding of the deceased. The other burial rituals are touched upon slightly, but not studied thoroughly. By focussing on the washing and shrouding, the author takes the reader into the depth of understanding and "mapping" the various elements of this ritual. For the reader who is interested in a thorough study on burial rituals among Muslims in a migration setting, this study may not be sufficient. For the reader who wants to be informed on the ritual dynamics and elements of the washing and shrouding, this work provides an excellent content and also challenges the reader to think further more on this subject. The focus on mapping and further development of theoretical approaches might sound a bit "raw," but the author does an excellent job in taking the reader by the hand through this journey. The book is well structured, with a clear introduction and overview in the first chapter. The following chapters are dedicated to the ritual elements, ritual roles, ritual beliefs, and ritual narratives. All chapters are set up in the same order, which makes them very readable. Although the conclusion seems to summarise and bring together what has already been said in the previous chapters, it also touches upon some interesting point for further research. A research which is very much still needed in this field. This work is a valuable addition to this genre of studies.

Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany

**Walker, Anthony R.:** Śākyamuni and G'ui\_sha. Two Essays on Buddhism in the Lahu and Wa Mountains. Fribourg: Academic Press, 2014. 153 pp. ISBN 978-3-7278-1739-7. (Studia Instituti Anthropos, 54) Price: € 50.00

The pool of scientists working on the so-called Highland Tribes of Southeast Asia is very small, so small in fact, that for young aspiring scientists in this field it is just as important to know who is studying what as it is to know about the object of study itself. One of the most renowned scientists in this small pool, Anthony Walker