Rezensionen

Adinkrah, Mensah: Witchcraft, Witches, and Violence in Ghana. New York: Berghahn Books, 2015. 325 pp. ISBN 978-1-78238-560-8. Price: $ 110.00

This book is about Ghanaian witchcraft related violence and witch hunts, especially among the Akan, the largest ethnic group in central and southern Ghana. In addressing how violence emanates from witchcraft in present-day Ghana, there is beautiful and exhaustive detail about how witchcraft is entrenched and pervasive in Ghanaian society. He describes how witchcraft is most commonly associated with the poor and marginal, mostly elderly women and stems from feelings of envy and resentment towards kin. He describes witch sightings – witches are commonly seen as balls of fire –, cannibalistic witches who turn their victims into goats or sheep, symptoms of bewitchment – dreams or nightmares in which the victim is attacked by wild animals –, modes of transmitting witchcraft – intrauterine transfer, or food such as palm fruit soup, or gifts from close kin. He examines the relationship between witchcraft and alcohol, witchcraft and infertility, witchcraft and academic failure; even who cannot be bewitched. Adinkrah shows how witchcraft is embedded in local culture; in popular Ghanaian music, such as highlife, and in Akan proverbs such as the saying, "there is witchcraft in every abusua" (162 f.). He records, how the Ghanaian popular press regularly carries stories about witch confessions, witch hunts, and witchcraft accusations, and he wonderfully illustrates how the letters and features sections of the press are full of witch beliefs and gossip.

Adinkrah gives numerous examples of witch murders, written by him under snappy, almost tabloid headings: "I Thought I Was Killing a Lion"; "Mob Lynches Three Elderly Women"; "Two Women Stoned to Death"; "My Grandmother Is Responsible for My Mental Illness." He also provides numerous examples of witches undergoing trials by ordeals, exorcism, of two children being set on fire by their own father who burns the heels of his sons to stop them flying at night. Most interestingly, he looks at witchcraft trials and how these capture the public imagination and result in packed courtrooms and media reports. For example, he examines the case of Abena Kobua (1975) where two civil lawsuits were filed by plaintiffs who Abena Kobua had accused of being in a witches coven, she knew this because she herself was a witch. The defendants sued her for damages and, indeed, along with her mother in law, she was found liable for defamation of character. Should, however, asks Adinkrah, she have been allowed in court to strip naked and show off her witchcraft powers? Who would be held responsible if indeed she did this? Did the court give credence to witchcraft? Can a witch's status be proven? In handing a guilty verdict, was the court confirming the existence of witchcraft? These are all interesting questions that bring into debate interesting notions of the real, rationality, modernity, and the religious.

Let there be no doubt that the comprehensive detail covered by Adinkrah about Akan witchcraft is extensive, likewise his review of the extensive literature on Akan witchcraft. What is lacking however and this is a huge omission in my opinion, is any attempt to locate this fascinating detail in any real historical or modern-day context, colonialisation, postcolonialisation, or otherwise. The links between the global and the local and the thriving of West African witchcraft discourses under capitalism has to be addressed. Many anthropologists thought that witchcraft in Ghana would die out as Ghana became more "modern" and that witchcraft was simply "a primitive superstition," an obstacle to development. Of course, witchcraft is nothing of the sort – a highly complex relationship exists between the occult economy and the disruptive global context in which West Africa finds itself. There is an extensive literature on the ways in which West African witchcraft relates to social anxiety, uncertainty, and unrest. This is not, however, addressed by Adinkrah in any meaningful way. This is, so to speak, the elephant in the room. From theories of witchcraft and social strain gauge, tension, witchcraft and social structure, "inexplicable" misfortune and social change, or more recent attempts to locate witchcraft as a moral critique of modernity and debates surrounding the "witchcraft of modernity" and the "modernity of witchcraft," there is an huge library of anthropological literature which Adinkrah does not engage with in a meaningful fashion! While, of course, numerous valid criticisms have been made, not least of the attempt to see witchcraft as a magical appendage of the real world of Western economics, the relationship between West African witchcraft and globalisation, power, illicit accumulation, excessive consumption, and the rise in witchcraft narratives about "blood money" or wealth divorced from production needs to be addressed. Or, an alternative relationship posited between witchcraft and the politics of elites and the Ghanaian postcolonial state and/or neoliberal marketplace. In a modern age where witchcraft narratives are a comment on new types

of sociality and inequality, the rise in new technologies has led to witchcraft traversing social scales and witchcraft rumour thriving about state policies and urban life amid global flows of symbols and images about wealth and poverty. To be sure, this is a detailed account of Ghanaian and particularly Akan beliefs about witchcraft. But devoid of a local or global context, Adinkrah fails to show how witchcraft is a modern, sophisticated phenomenon, or why witchcraft violence is so prevalent in modern-day Ghana. And without this crucial explanation, witchcraft remains labelled a traditional, insular African belief which is surely not the intention of Adinkrah's absorbing book.

Jane Parish

Angé, Olivia, and **David Berliner** (eds.): Anthropology and Nostalgia. New York: Berghahn Books, 2015. 235 pp. ISBN 978-1-78238-453-3. Price: $ 95.00

Nostalgia is certainly not a new phenomenon. Several authors in this edited volume trace its origins to Odysseus's longing for Ithaca. Yet, as Olivia Angé and David Berliner note in their introduction to this volume, it is increasingly drawing the attention of ethnographers, especially those working in contexts of political instability. Despite its increasing presence in anthropological writings, especially outside of the former Soviet Union, nostalgia has yet to emerge as a coherent object of analysis within the discipline. The present volume seeks to rectify this by situating nostalgia firmly within memory studies.

The book's chapters can be divided into two broad sections, each comprising four chapters. The first set of chapters continues the conversation about the place of nostalgia in the former Soviet Union. Gediminas Lankauskas's chapter takes issue with tendency of post-Soviet scholarship to ascribe any remembering of the communist era to nostalgia. Through an examination of a Lithuanian "experiential-immersive theme park" known as "the Bunker," he shows how the past can become a site through which tourists engage in memorial entertainment, consuming the commercialized performances of history that are presented there.

If Lankauskas shows how commodification opens up a space for non-nostalgic memories of the Soviet Past, Jonathan Bach's chapter shows how the same process of commercialization can itself become a means of nostalgia. While East German products all but disappeared following reunification, Bach shows how, in recent years, these products accrued value as part of private collections and as commodities. Though the formerly Eastern European brands are today often produced by West German companies, Bach convincingly argues that their consumption becomes an important site for the reassertion of East German identity.

While Maya Nadkarni and Olga Shevchenko likewise relate the influx of Western commodities to post-Soviet nostalgia, they focus less on the proliferation of new objects than on their absence. Although the end of communism in Russia and Hungary was accompanied by a massive influx of consumer goods, many of these products were priced beyond the reach of all citizens. In this context, the brands which vanished after the fall of the Berlin Wall became imbued with the affective, moral, and political projects of the former regime. Understanding the nostalgia for Soviet brands, they argue, requires us to attend not only to the pasts they index but also to the vanquished horizons of expectation that those pasts promised.

If Nadkarni and Shevchenko focus on the ways objects become imbued with past ethos, Chris Hann's chapter concentrates on the failures of the socialist regime to displace the symbols and myths of earlier eras. Understanding how Hungarians relate to the recent past, he argues, requires accounting not only for their Soviet experiences but also for their memories of earlier epochs. In a context in which praising the socialist past is taboo, fondness for the period can only be expressed in the private sphere.

While the first set of chapters is deeply entrenched in Eastern European regional debates, the second set of chapters extends these conversations to other geographic contexts. Joseph Josy Lévy and Inaki Olazabal look at how the image of the house key came to embody attachment to pre-expulsion Jewish Spain. Though house keys remained hidden as family secrets or images in legends, recent efforts by the Spanish government to foster heritage tourism allowed the symbol to take on new life. Serving as a marker of Jewish patrimony sites, the key facilitates the imposition of a phantasmagoric Sepharad onto the built environment of contemporary Spain.

Writing in a very different context, Rebecca Bryant likewise focuses on how Turkish Cypriots form their identity in part through rituals of return to the villages they were forced to flee in the midst of Cyprus's Civil War. However, through careful attention to the erasure of the village's minority Greek population from these festivals, Bryant shows how these nostalgic practices work as much as acts of forgetting as acts of remembrance. She argues that these sorts of nostalgias are less a yearning for a past state of affairs than a longing for essentialism, the desire for an unchallenged identity that may never have existed.

Olivia Angé, by contrast, questions the very temporality of nostalgia itself. Examining bartering practices amongst indigenous traders in the Argentine Andes, she argues that references to the time of the ancestors are less about a longing for the past than they are about obtaining material gains in the present. By reminding fellow traders of their shared social bonds, traders are impelled to grant each other more favorable terms than would strangers engaged in capitalist enterprise.

Petra Rethmann likewise questions the backwards-looking temporality of nostalgia in her reflections on a conference on communism in Berlin. For Rethmann, left-wing nostalgia for lost political projects does not provide a sufficient basis for overcoming the present and achieving social change. She advocates replacing such longing with an embrace of a utopian desire. Rallying around a policy guaranteed basic income, Rethmann argues, provides an opportunity to inculcate just such a future-oriented imagination.

Bookending these two sections are a pair of particularly challenging chapters for anthropologists. Appropriately, the two mirror the complex temporalities of nostal-