es certainty. From this, Appadurai concludes that the market is not a place where supply and demand is negotiated, but rather an "ontological absolute" that creates economic and cultural realities itself.

In chapters 7 and 8, Appadurai looks at the social outcome of this "sacred" market. Starting with a number of conceptual thoughts on dividuals (as opposed to individuals), he looks for ways to transform the spirit of financial capitalism and the logic of derivatives markets from the "current exploitative, asymmetric and antidemocratic financial order" (118) into progressive and democratic structures. Based on one of the book's rather few empirical pages, which deals with "toilet festivals" in Mumbai, he claims that the logic of derivatives presents the opportunity to turn "shit [sic] into social value and exclusion into empowerment" (123). Also, and surprisingly, he defines debt as a potential instrument of progress – if the profit resulting from it is "democratized" and "socialized" (128).

In chapter 9, Appadurai finally gives an analysis of the financial crisis and talks about the "failure of language," which is prominently set out in the title of the book. As he puts it, the chain of promises, i.e., the derivatives market, did not break due to its referential nature alone. Rather, it was the rise of a new financial instrument – the swap – that challenged the contractual promises of the former derivatives market. Economically speaking, a swap is the option to exchange an asset for another predefined asset at a certain time in the future. In practice, swaps are often used to secure investors from a future decrease in an asset's value. To Appadurai, it is thus a bet on the fact that promises made between market participants will be broken – a *promise against a promise*. And, as the author claims, the popularity of such swaps caused the chain of promises to break in 2008, resulting in an almost unprecedented financial crisis.

With this book, Appadurai confirms his status as one of the truly original thinkers of our time. His aim to bring the notion of spirit back to anthropological work on the financial markets is spot-on and truly needed. Here, Appadurai shows his immense knowledge of social theory and his ability to make this knowledge productive when analyzing contemporary cultural fields. Having said this, I must also give a word of warning. In many parts of the book, Appadurai's analyses require a fair amount of expertise and endurance, as he integrates thoughts from scholars of anthropology, sociology, linguistics, philosophy, and economics without too much introduction. Also, the book does not explain much about the functioning of financial markets in the sense of an empirical analysis. In this regard, the book itself is a kind of derivative, building on and referring to data from other researchers. So, while readers looking for empirical and explanatory texts might be better off referring to one of the ethnographies mentioned above, I highly recommend this book to readers who are interested in social theory and in an original and anthropological explanation of the financial crisis.

Stefan Leins

Århem, Nikolas: Forests, Spirits, and High Modernist Development. A Study of Cosmology and Change among the Katuic Peoples in the Uplands of Laos and Vietnam. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2014. 463 pp. ISBN 978-91-554-9113-0. (Uppsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology, 55) Price: SEK 382.00

Among the most pressing issues in the current anthropological study of human-environment relations is the relationship between perspectives that elaborate from local cosmologies and are often connected to the ontological turn, and approaches focusing on the way local situations are embedded in contexts of globalization, state power and neoliberal regimes, in brief, political ecology. This rich and lively book situates itself at the very intersection of these trends. It details the cosmology of Southeast Asian uplanders, their relationships with landscapes, species, and spirits, while at the same time analyzing the role of the hegemonic development agency of the state. It thus contributes to the study of human-environment relationships as well as to upland-lowland relationships in the region which James Scott has popularized as "Zomia." The book is based on extensive fieldwork among Katu, Mon-Khmer speaking uplanders in Vietnam, and a shorter survey of Nge-Kriang, who speak a different Katuic language, for a development project in Laos.

While the villages in Vietnam have been heavily affected by the Second Indochinese War and succeeding resettlements, they were able to maintain their lifestyle as swiddeners and users of forests to a large degree. This is the condition of a rather remarkable cosmology. While many uplanders in Southeast Asia consider village space as the domain of ancestral protection, the centers of Katu moral space are situated in specific hills and their dominating spirits. These hill spirits, located outside the village, manage moral life in the village and punish transgressions like incest or adultery. Thus, the dominant social entity, the village, encompasses the inhabited space and its swidden fields but also the old-growth forest where the spirits dwell. Life in the village is defined through this complementarity of inside and outside, which does not separate a moral, social space inside from a wild and immoral space outside. The spirit forests, prohibited for agriculture, may consist of up to 30% of the village territory. Århem thus calls the beings dominating them "ecosystem spirits" – beings that define a place in its entire complexity, including forests, slopes, watercourses, and animals.

This leads Århem to his central thesis. The inclusion of old-growth forest into the moral domain of the village functions like environmental protection, as it provides biodiversity hotspots that house ecologically sensitive species like gibbons. The well-worn argument that animist cosmologies protect nature while naturalist ones destroy it often involves a good degree of romantic fantasizing about the exotic and authentic other – and, unfortunately, this volume is not entirely free of such projections, as when the author unnecessarily compares Katu ontology with the film "Avatar." But he makes good on it by providing exceptionally solid ethnographic data. Animist care of spirit spaces and environmental protection end up having very comparable results, even though they

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are epistemologically entirely different. Århem also does not argue the general applicability of this principle. The assumption of a protective effect of sacred forests has been critically discussed before, partially because many of these prohibited areas are rather small. Those of the Katuic groups are unusually large, and their moral authority over humans seems unusually severe.

Although Århem analyzes the effects of resettlement and road building on the Vietnamese villages, state relations and "high modernity" – a term taken from James Scott – move to the fore in his discussion of the consultancy fieldwork he conducted for a sustainable forestry project in Laos. While this material, presented in chapters 8 and 9, initially seems disconnected to the rest of the book, it is here that his argument becomes most convincing. The project demanded making clear distinctions between natural and cultural zones of village land. Protection of old-growth forest contrasted with production forests and land used by the village. However, the zoning did not consider the differentiated and processual relationships villagers have with their forests. Both spirit forests and fallows in different phases of growth are important sources of forest products, making a separation of agricultural land, land with spiritual importance, and forests mostly meaningless. But the failure of the project was not only located on the conceptual level. Forestry officials in charge of getting villagers' compliance to the project knew well that village participation had been reduced by the Government of Laos to the mere supplication of labor. Also, they had to protect their income from other, more destructive logging companies. Thus, villagers were all too often only incompletely and misleadingly informed of the project's goals. Analytically, both the ontological and the political ecological approaches complement each other here in a single, forceful argument. Århem renders a complex and fascinating picture of cosmologies, classifications, hegemonies, and personal agencies that produce a rather destructive effect.

The theoretical implications of this are not fully elaborated. In some formulations, Århem comes close to an attitude that valorizes indigenous knowledge only because it holds up to a comparison with scientific knowledge, as if the latter provided the gold standard for knowledge anywhere. At the same time, referencing Philippe Descola and Tim Ingold, he maintains that Katuic cosmology and the European nature-culture divide are fundamentally different. This point could have been pursued further, even beyond the apparent dualism. Still, this does not diminish the force of the ethnographic argument.

The volume has probably proceeded a bit too quickly from dissertation thesis to book, and some editing and straightening up would have helped. However, in comparison to some theoretically much more elaborate recent work, the book is convincing in the way Århem makes his rich ethnography speak for itself. It is an important contribution to current studies of uplanders in Southeast Asia and provides a solid, engaging, and lucidly analyzed example of how local cosmologies and their relationships with high modernity can be brought together in a unified argument.

Guido Sprenger

Banton, Michael: What We Now Know About Race and Ethnicity. New York: Berghahn Books, 2015. 169 pp. ISBN 978-1-78238-603-2. Price: £ 63.00

Banton starts with a "paradox." In 2002, the American Sociological Association issued a statement about the "importance of collecting data on race," which declared that, although race was not a valid biological category, social data should still be collected using racial categories, for the purposes of monitoring the effects of social policy directed at correcting racial inequalities. To him, this paradox arises because social scientists do not properly separate out the domain of theoretical knowledge with its etic, analytic concepts from the domain of practical knowledge, with its emic, everyday concepts that serve to design and enact social policy and politics. He advocates starting with general theoretical problems, such as what motivates people to identify with and form relations with others, and engage in collective action. Social scientists should then examine the range of factors that shape these motivations, without making a priori assumptions about whether particular kinds of patterns and factors constitute a separate domain of "race" or "ethnic" relations and ideas.

At the end of the book Banton states: "[t]he overarching problem in this field is that of accounting for the social significance attributed to phenotypical differences among humans, compared with that attributed to cultural characteristics such as ethnic origin and socio-economic status" (155). This sounds like a statement many social scientists would sign up to: it delineates a field that is the historical and comparative study of emic concepts about human diversity, which vary across space and time. The problem, as Banton sees it, is that one subset of such emic concepts has been labelled as "race" by historians, social scientists, and philosophers (and another subset as "ethnicity"). The subset has little theoretical coherence, because experts cannot agree on which emic concepts to include in the subset. Humans have attached meanings to and accounted for observed human diversity, phenotypical and cultural, in very varied ways: as "phenotype" includes the entire physical organism, not just the specific aspects of it that have typically been associated with "race," the field as defined by Banton is very broad.

But even restricting phenotype to those specific aspects (the differences in physical appearance that seem to correlate roughly with continental distribution of humanity, such as skin colour, hair type, and facial features), problems remain. Should the way the ancient Greeks or the ancient Chinese explained human diversity be classed as "racial" on the basis that there are elements of environmental determinism and ideas about human heredity involved? Should 17th-century ideas about human diversity be included as "racial" alongside late 19th-century ideas, when "biology" had not yet emerged as a discipline? Was medieval anti-Semitism a form of racism? Historians differ on these questions. Should current cultural fundamentalism, which separates humans into essentially different groups by virtue of their culture, be classed as a form of racism (cultural racism), when it appears to make no reference to biology or even phenotype? Is Zionism a form

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